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**THE PASSIONATE EYE:
A CHRISTIAN SOCIAL POLITICAL ETHIC OF RESISTANCE TO TYRANNY**

by

Eliakim N-K. Shaanika

**Dip. Th., Paulinum United Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1983
M. T. S., Wilfrid Laurier University, 1992**

THESIS

**Submitted to the Faculty of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Theology in Christian Ethics**

1993

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Abstract

This essay discusses the moral permissibility of the use of violence in struggles for national liberation using the history of the movement for independence in Namibia as a test case. The methodology is that of liberation theology. The thesis is that the Namibian situation shows that, while violence is always at some level evil, it is sometimes a "necessary evil" and that, given the proper circumstances, participation in a violent revolutionary activity can be a permissible moral option for Christians.

The first chapter summarizes some of the history of colonialism and the ethics of missionaries to Namibia, first under the Germans and then under South Africa. While the Pietistic mission societies advocated an "apolitical" stance, they actually supported the colonial powers. Later, as some church leaders came to question South African policies, repression was directed against the churches as well.

The second chapter takes issue with a theology that would overly divide religion from social life or the personal from the political. Using the biblical images of the city set on a hill and servanthood and Bonhoeffer's concept of deputyship, this chapter argues that responsibility for the social and political life of a people is essential to Christian ethics.

Chapter three examines the ethics of revolutionary conspiracy. While conspiracy might seem an odd topic for Christian ethics, this chapter makes the point that the Christian has a duty to resist unjust laws and systems. At times such resistance could result in Christian participation in conspiracies against the government.

The final chapter directly addresses the question of the permissibility of Christian participation in violent revolutionary actions. The preferred strategy for Christians to seek social change in unjust systems is nonviolent resistance, which is discussed as "Jesus' third way." While nonviolence is the method most consistent with the words of Jesus in the gospels, in some cases nonviolent methods might lead to increased repression rather than change. In such situations it is permissible for Christians to take up arms to prevent even worse violence. Because the government of South Africa refused to recognize the humanity of indigenous Namibians and only dealt with nonviolent resistance by killing even more innocent people, the Namibian struggle for independence was one such situation.

The Passionate Eye:
A Christian Social Political Ethic of Resistance to tyranny.

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To

Dad: Andreas Shaanika

Mom: Hertha Shaanika

For the caring love and compassion I learned from them.

In Memory of

Grandma: Mwaalua Maria Mulilo. 1895 - 27.01.1989.

For her words still proclaim:

"EHO LYOHENDA LYAKALUNGA OLYA TALA KOMAPONGO,
NOYE TA THETA PO OMAHODHI GAWO."

"GOD'S PASSIONATE EYE LOOKS UPON THE OPPRESSED,
AND IT IS GOD WHO WIPES AWAY THE TEARS
FROM THEIR EYES."

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INTRODUCTION

Namibia has its own unique history of hardship and suffering. Historians have characterized this history in several ways. Out of anguish and pain, one Namibian referred to the country as "created in God's anger."¹ Some writers have portrayed Namibia as "the last Colony," or as "a land of tears, and a land of promise." Still other have viewed Namibia as a "violent heritage," or "a brutal mandate," that has become a 'battle front'.² These historians or writers desire to bring to light the long history of suffering and anguish which Namibians have experienced under foreign domination. For the purpose of this study, it may be helpful to give a brief overview of the historical background through which Namibians have passed.

Namibia became a German colony in 1884. Shortly after the German conquest of Namibia, the colonizers began with "acquisition of the land" and its people "in the name of the German Emperor."³ Namibians primarily attempted to "defend their liberty by diplomatic means."⁴ After a decade, when Namibians realized their attempts at passive resistance only resulted in despair, they rose up against German oppression. Without concern for human life,

¹Jorgen Lissner, *Namibia 75: Hope, Fear, Ambiguity*. (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation, nd.), p. 1.

²See Roy J. Enquist, *Namibia: Land of Tears, Land of Promise* (London: Associated University Presses, 1990); Reginald H. Green, Kimmo Kiljunen, and Marja-Lisa Kiljunen, eds., *Namibia: The Last Colony* (London: Longman, 1981); John Ya Otto, *Battlefront Namibia: An Autobiography of John Ya Otto* (Westport: Lawrence Hill & Company, 1981); Allard K. Lowenstein, *Brutal Mandate: A Journey to South West Africa [Namibia]* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1962); and David Soggot, *Namibia: Violent Heritage*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).

³Caarl-J. Hellberg, *The Voice of the Voiceless: The Involvement of the Lutheran World Federation in Southern Africa, 1945-1979* (Lund: Verbum Berlings, 1979), p. 18.

⁴*Ibid.*, p.19.

Von Trotha, a German chief officer in command of Namibia, issued on Oct. 2, 1904, an "extermination order" against the indigenous population.⁵ He declared:

All Hereros must leave the land. Any Herero found within the German borders, with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot. I shall no longer receive any women or children; I will drive them back to their people or I will shoot them. This is my decision for the Herero people.

(Signed) The Great General of the Mighty Kaiser, Von Trotha.⁶

As a result, by the end of 1907, the Herero people had lost 80% of their population. The Nama people were also decreased by 50%.

The same oppressive rule was fostered under South African authority from 1915 until the late 1980s. Under South Africa the Namibians experienced dehumanization and an attitude of inferiority as a result of the apartheid policy of separate development. Apartheid maintained white supremacy, and suppressed the black population in Namibia in the same way blacks have been treated in South Africa. This policy is a denial of the fundamental human rights declared in the United Nations' Charter. Religiously speaking, apartheid is diametrically opposed to the gospel of Christ.

Historically, the Namibian people have experienced the violation of their community heritage as well their communal well-being. In this context individual Christians were forced to stand for justice, and have played a significant role in the struggle for freedom, justice, and peace. The struggle has resulted in great achievement. When independence from South Africa was internationally recognized on March 21, 1990, Namibians wept tears of joy. As the psalter

⁵Jon M. Bridgman, *The Revolt of the Hereros*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981), p. 129.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 128.

states: "Those who sow in tears reap in joy"⁷ For Namibians, independence day has become a historical day, and a day of righteousness, when their land was declared a free country from colonial domination.

For the Christian community in Namibia, the independence celebration has become also a day of significant meaning for faith in the mercy of God. "Independence for me as a Christian," Bishop Friedrik Hendrik acknowledges, "is a positive answer to our prayers of many years because we have been praying for independence, freedom, and political change in this country."⁸

The day of new reality that was achieved "after many years of strife and uncertainty,"⁹ has become for Namibians a historical and joyful day which marks a passing through the wilderness of colonialism in which they walked for 106 years. The international community that observed the celebration event affirmed, with the same tone, that independence is a significant achievement of the struggle for justice:

For a land that bears the dubious distinction of being the last colony in Africa, for a people torn in this way and during 23 years of rebellion against South African rule, Namibia and its inhabitants ushered independence in a hearteningly relaxed and good natured fashion.¹⁰

Religiously speaking, it is in this celebration event that many Christians in Namibia were brought into a new faith, believing in God's power as liberating action in human history. In so

⁷Ps. 126:5.

⁸*Namibia Report* 1, 1 (3 April 1990), p. 4.

⁹Akron, Ohio, *Beacon Journal* (March 25, 1990), cited in *Facts on File* 21, 6 (March 16-31, 1990), p. 332

¹⁰*Atlanta Journal* (March 26, 1990), cited in *Facts on File* 21, 6 (March 16-31, 1990), p. 332.

doing they joined Miriam and Deborah¹¹ in singing together a new song of deliverance, and praising God for the liberating power that is shown through struggle. They realized the struggle for liberation was indispensable, and acknowledged the evidence that without struggle there would be no celebration. The role of individual persons who played a part in the resistance against the colonial powers was recognized. The Namibian Christian community affirmed that if individual persons had kept silent during the German colonial rule of 1884-1915, and the South African rule of 1915-1989, then the Namibian community would never have harvested with joy the fruits of independence. The resistance against these authorities was the only way to independence.

Observing the reality of independence, the way it has been achieved, and the way the community is now shaped, one is compelled to reassess the missionary and the young churches' requirement of submission to governments in power, especially as it stressed loyalty to the government even if it ruled without the consent of its subjects. In this regard, some questions need to be addressed: If these teachings had been obeyed literally would there be an independent Namibia today? Is it right to obey a government no matter what it is? Is it right to struggle against an unjust government? When we view independence as God's positive answer to our prayers, do we really realize God's activities in the history of the Namibian struggle?

In answer to these questions, the thesis of this paper is that.

1. There are certain situations in which it is not only permissible for Christians to resist, but also the duty of Christians to resist oppressive authority.

¹¹see Ex. 15:11f.

2. In resisting injustice, Christians will often adopt non-violent methods, but may also, in certain situations, join in armed struggle. In resistance to oppression and injustice the situation is sometimes so serious that Christians may use violence to resist, and the Namibian struggle for independence was one such situation.

In exploring this thesis, this paper will discuss the ethical stand of a Christian toward an oppressive authority. In order to provide the context for discussion, the first chapter provides a brief view of colonial and missionary thinking in Namibia on the church-state relationship. The second chapter will answer the thinking of the missionaries with a view of the Christian's ethical and social responsibility, focusing on how a Christian ought to be a person for others. Using the thought developed in chapter two, chapter three will discuss the ethical standpoint of a Christian toward an unrepentant tyranny. Chapter four concentrates on the Christian's political and social responsibility in the restoration of a broken relationship in the community - especially when that relationship has been broken and the break institutionalized by the governing power - and explores ways of acting for the liberation of humankind. Because the nature of the struggle for independence so often marks a nation's future path, this paper also includes an epilogue which moves beyond the thesis to introduce some issues in national reconciliation and the continuing ethical challenge of liberation in an independent Namibia.

CHAPTER 1

Colonialism and Mission in Namibia

With what was often an ascetic view of the Christian's relation to the world and a literalistic interpretation of the Scriptures, European missionaries of a nineteenth century Pietist bent planted Christian community in Namibia. They maintained that Christians should stand apart from public social life. Believing that public life was the arena of immoral people, they held that society was to be avoided. For the young churches, the gospel was understood to focus on winning souls. Therefore Christians should concentrate mainly on "spreading the gospel, preaching the faith, and making converts" in order to increase membership in the church.¹

For this reason churches paid little attention to interpreting the gospel in terms of social responsibility to the world. Moreover, in refraining from associating with non-Christians, "those members of the tribes who were baptized, would also be called on to reject all the traditional customs and ties with their own community." To give up the old traditional life also normally "meant giving up one's family and kin."²

Similarly, attempts were made to discourage Christians from accepting the authority of their traditional chiefs because the political structures of the tribe were seen to be bound up

¹Abegbolu, "Tribalism to Nationhood," p. 183

²Teddy Aarni, *The Kalunga Concept in Ovambo Religion from 1870 Onwards* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell International, 1982), p. 33-34.

within pagan ritual practices.³ "Any involvement of Christians in the tribal societies, customs, and social systems"⁴ was thought to be practicing apostasy. This sanction against Christian participation in any tribal social customs had created ethical tension within the Christian community and between the Christians and their non-Christian family members. During the time of anticolonialist nationalism the churches also considered it unethical or unchristian for a member of the Christian community to engage in party politics. An example of this tension came in the period of revolutionary change from oppressive powers when a group of Christians who worked for social change were labelled as "Anti-Christ", "demons" or "Communists."⁵ Within the Lutheran Church, individual pastors were encouraged to "refuse to conduct baptism, confirmation or marriage ceremonies for them."⁶ When individual members of the churches discussed together the question of revolutionary change, the church leaders maintained that Christians should not be involved in politics or any program that works for societal interests because such activities are worldly. In this ethical dilemma many Namibian Christian youths raised questions about the relationship of church and society.

Many Africans are seeking answers to their questions, but the Church is not playing its full part in helping young people to face the problem of society. To them God is the God of the Church, not the God of politics and social life. They need to see God as one God: to see that the Church is concerned with the whole life.⁷

³Abegbolu, "Tribalism to Nationhood," p. 184.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁵Vinnia Ndadi, *Breaking Contract Labour System: The Story of Vinnia Ndadi* (Richmond, Canada: LSM Press, 1974), p. 87.

⁶Helao Shityuwete, *Never Follow The Wolf. The Autobiography of a Namibian Freedom Fighter* (London: Kliptown Books, 1990), p. 39.

⁷Abegbolu, "Tribalism to Nationhood," p. 185.

John Taylor, an English missionary to Africa, is right in his ethical critique of this view of the relation of church and society. He understood the need for society to be measured by God's ethical vocabulary of relationship. He argued:

If the Church in Africa (by which is meant the whole Christian community spread throughout Africa, but focused, as it must be, in the congregations of the locally organized churches) gives the impression that God is not concerned with [human] social and political affairs, then [people] will not be very much concerned with such a God. And this is not because [people] wish to use God for their own ends and demands..., but if they feel that God cares nothing for the things which vitally affected their daily lives and stir their deepest emotions, they will not easily be persuaded that such a God loves them in any real sense at all.⁸

From this tension many questions arose: What is the Christian responsibility to the world? Should Christians divide life into compartments? Is God the God of the church only, or is God the God of all creation? Does political life stand outside of God's control?

1.1. Ethics of Conflicting Duties

It is surprising to note a drastic and a contradictory attitude in the church's position. When the church turned her focus to support the oppressive government in power, the church that otherwise stressed apolitical abstinence now turned to stress conformity to the oppressive government. Perhaps this shift is not hard to understand when we see the connection of the missionaries with colonialism. "Until the formation of an indigenous church," Enquist notes, "the political policy of the Rhenish Mission was to establish the role of the white colonial presence, primarily German, subsequently the South African, and weaken the fabric of tribal society."⁹

⁸John V. Taylor, *Christianity and Politics in Africa* (London: Penguin Books, 1957), p. 9.

⁹Enquist, *Namibia*, p. 55.

Under the influence of the Rhenish Mission, the church therefore established "a peaceful and friendly relationship" between mission and colonialism. As a result the church "uncritically accepted the colonialist policies of the empire."¹⁰ Heinz Hunke, a German missionary in Namibia wrote:

The German missionaries who entered in the country and attempted to establish Christianity among the different tribes were initiators of a long history of dedication to a high spiritual ideal, belief in a religious mission, zeal for German Christian civilization, and denial of any proper value of African society, ethics or religion.¹¹

Because the missionaries believed that Christianity was intertwined with German culture, evangelization and colonialism found ways to work hand in hand. This ideal of mission and colonialism has its roots in the ethic of Friedrich Fabri, the director of the Rhenish Mission Society at Barmen.¹² He encouraged the German settlers in Namibia to establish an imperial presence that would both strengthen the prestige of German culture and suppress indigenous traditions.¹³ Fabri's theory of mission, however, went beyond the boundary of legitimate missionary goals when he suggested that missionary work act as an essential factor in Germany's "national undertaking."¹⁴ He believed that "Christian missions can be useful for the purpose of colonialization."¹⁵ In Namibia therefore, because most missionaries were German, the church was influenced to welcome the German occupation of territory, partly from German national

¹⁰*Ibid.*, p. 48-49.

¹¹Cited in *ibid.*, p. 48.

¹²Stephen Neill, *Colonialism and Christian Mission* (London, Lutterworth Press, 1966), p. 389-392.

¹³Enquist, *Namibia*, p. 48.

¹⁴Neill, *Colonialism*, p. 392.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 389.

pride and partly because of the blessings of order and security.¹⁶ The Rhenish missionaries "pleaded with Bismarck to send 400 men to bolster German authority, lest England or the Cape step in . . . [and] render the stay of the German intolerable."¹⁷

Primarily because of Fabri's theory of mission and colonization, the church worked closely with the government in power and compelled indigenous people to promote obedience and conformity to colonial power. In so doing, the church had to condemn those who advocated civil disobedience to colonial laws. Fabri's theory thus became a motivation for the young churches to convince the individual Christian communities to accept the government in power and accept slavery. "Even when a political conflict arises over the question of slavery," Friedrich Fabri writes, "a Christian can never substantiate his[/her] occasional solidarity with the ant-slavery party on the basis of God's word."¹⁸ In this view of the church, Christians have to conform to the government in power because it is required by Romans 13, which states, "Let every person be subject to governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God."¹⁹ Viewing the government as ordained by God is certainly part of the Christian tradition, ethical analysis of this point of view is not complete until the text has been interpreted and applied to the specific Namibian situation.

Enquist is right when he says that the ethical perspective of the missionaries and young churches, which did not deal with moral issues raised by the introduction of European political

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 392.

¹⁷Bridgman, *Hereros*, p. 42.

¹⁸Cited in Karl H. Hertz, ed., *Two Kingdoms in One World: A Sourcebook in Christian Social Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), p. 98.

¹⁹Rom 13:1ff

praxis into Namibian culture, created a social dilemma.²⁰ He notes correctly that social issues were not addressed on theological grounds: "The Rhenish Mission's abandoning of the Christian tradition of social ethics created a vacuum into which a simplistic policy of support for German political interests could enter unchallenged."²¹ The social dilemma was also the result of the church's attitude in siding with the oppressive government. In this way the church tolerated the political evil of colonialism and allowed it to infiltrate its thinking unchallenged. The results of this can be seen upon the introduction of the question of the apartheid system. Rather than resisting this violation of the Gospel, the church welcomed the policy and suggested to the government the plan of reservations for indigenous people. The letter written by Dr. Schreiber, the moderator of the German mission in Namibia, to the authorities is an example. Schreiber considered the plan justifiable: "It would certainly be no shame but a most welcome development if the bulk of the territory passed into the hands of the white settlers, all the more so as the country is far too large for such a small population."²²

The churches played a significant role in the creation of the apartheid policy. D.P. Botha, a Reformed pastor, asserted apartheid to be an essential policy for which the churches ought to provide a theological justification: "As a Church, we have always worked purposefully

²⁰Enquist, *Namibia*, p. 49-51.

²¹*Ibid.*, p. 56.

²²Horst Drechsler, *"Let Us Die Fighting" - The Struggle of the Herero and Nama against German Imperialism (1884-1915)* (London: Zed Press, 1980), p. 114.

for the separation of the races. In this regard apartheid can rightfully be called a Church policy."²³

In good faith, therefore, oppressive governments expected all church workers who were allowed into Namibia on temporary residence permits to serve the church "according to good behavior."²⁴ "Good behavior" meant that church workers had to "promote the government policy, encourage the black Namibian people to accept contract labor, and stress conformity to the colonial authority."²⁵

²³John W. De Gruchy and Charles Villa Vicencio, *Apartheid Is a Heresy* (Cape Town: David Philip Publisher, 1983), p. 6. This was stated with pride by the Dutch Reformed Churches in their official publication, *Die Kerkbode*, 22 Sept. 1948, pp. 664-665.

²⁴W. B. De Villiers, "The Present State of the Church in South West Africa," in *Namibia Now*, IDOC International Documentation Participation Project on The Future of the Missionary Enterprise, No.3 (1973), p. 83.

²⁵Green, Kiljunen, and Kiljunen, *Namibia*, p. 133.

CHAPTER 2

SUBMISSION TO SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

African Christians in Namibia have no argument with the obedience which St. Paul declares should be given to the authorities. The point of argument here is the proper interpretation of St. Paul's words in the Namibian context. Ethical questions concerning the specifics of authority arise for debate. Which authority has God placed over the Namibian people? Which one do they have to obey: the authority of their own chiefs, or that of the emperor of Germany--or later that of South Africa--which is imposed on them without their consent? Therefore, before Romans 13 can be considered, the contest between the authority of indigenous chiefs and colonial authority must be acknowledged and addressed.

Learning from daily conflicts of life under colonialism, individual Christians were awakened by biblical ethics and started to question Christian responsibility toward the suffering and oppressed poor. Thus, in a critical situation, Christians concluded that their obligation to the community was to defend neither the church nor their own careers in it. For them the need was for "the Church to see Jesus Christ in the starving, the naked, the hungry, and the exploited."¹ Encountering Bonhoeffer's question, "Who is Jesus Christ for us today?" Christians in Namibia viewed Jesus as "the suffering black." This means that Jesus Christ identifies with

¹Colin O'Brien Winter, *Namibia: The Story of a Bishop in Exile* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1977), p. 43.

the oppressed and seeks their liberation.² "Suffering black" is therefore not primarily a racial designation, but a condition of "wretchedness in which the oppressed live."³ As the Anglican Church of Namibia confessed:

We see Jesus himself poor, and rejected by the oppressive forces of his day, taking his stand on the side of the poor and oppressed In Namibia, we see Jesus in our midst in many forms--in the poor, in the despised, the hungry, the wretched, the tortured, and in political prisoner[s].⁴

2.1. The Christian Community as the City on a Hill

*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do [people] light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before [people].*⁵

What is the city on a hill? Why the city? What is its purpose in a broken society?

The metaphor of the city on a hill portrays a real, responsible, and visible community. The city on a hill is a new humanity which is a visible sign of God's reign in the world. It is a faithful Christian community in a violent world that should live as the world ought to live. A faithful community provides security, shelter, and serves the needs of the people. It serves

Zephania Kameeta, *Why O Lord: Psalms and Sermons from Namibia*, The Risk Books Series (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), p. 9.

³*Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁴"The Maseru Declaration," cited in Peter Katjavivi, *Church and Liberation in Namibia* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), p. 143. The Maseru Declaration is a statement issued by the delegates of the Anglican Church of Namibia, gathered in Maseru, Lesotho, 2-6 July, 1978. The declaration condemned the slaughter of Namibians by South African troops at the refugee camp at Cassinga, Angola, in which more than 800 people died and 400 were injured. The declaration called for the Church to side with the oppressed of Namibia against the oppressor, South Africa and her allies.

⁵Matt. 5:14-16, RSV.

to illuminate the whole society around it with its witness of peace and justice. It is present to produce suitable social change in its surroundings.

In the Scriptures, the figure of light represents, as Stephen Motto says, "a positive, aggressive force combating darkness." In the Old Testament it is seen "as associated with the breaking of the rod of oppression in bloody war. . . . It is the establishment of justice, . . . the force for justice and the image of triumph and dignity."⁶

With the metaphors of the light of the world and the city on a hill, the Christian community is reminded of its social responsibility to the world as a reality here and now on earth. It is called to the task of creating social justice and right relationships within the community. Those who are part of this responsible community are not to think only of life in heaven, but also of their most important earthly tasks as well. The Christian community's place of responsibility is in the service of Christ within the world and for the needs of the world. For this reason, Christian community in the world is not simply the gathering of those redeemed out of the world, nor is its task simply to shed light on the path to heaven where justice and truth reign. The call of the community of light is, as Kameeta says, "to shine in this world where people despise, suppress and exploit one another."⁷

Christian community is present in the midst of the world in order to warn the world against the danger that might fall upon society, to rebuke the world's unfaithfulness, to exhort the world with the preaching of good news, and to convince the world that the grace of God is for all and is directed to all people. The city on a hill has the great task of telling the world that

⁶Stephen Charles Motto, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 134 (with references to Isaiah 9:2, 4-5, 7 and Isaiah 42:6).

⁷Kameeta, *Why O Lord*, p. 50.

God is the source of its life and that, through Christ, God has restored the life of the community. The Christian community's message is that, in Christ, God has shown a tremendous love and a costly responsibility for the life of the world. Therefore, it is now up to the community to act in response to God's love, and to make this love known for all people without distinction. It is now up to this community to prove itself responsible as it cares and shows this love for others.

The Christian community acts responsibly when it obeys Christ's command to love the neighbor and follows in the steps of Jesus Christ. Christian community is known by fellowship, compassion, and suffering together for the welfare and well-being of others: "If any person would come after me, let him[/her] deny himself[/herself] and take up his[/her] cross and follow me. For whoever, would save his[/her] life will lose it; whoever loses his[/her] life for my sake and the gospel will save it."⁸

A community which shares needs and joys with others is a people who responds to God's love: "[The one] who has two coats, let [that one] share with [the one] who has none; and [the one] who has food, let [that one] do likewise."⁹ In fact, through sharing, the Christian community shows a sense of fellowship, oneness and belonging. In such strong fellowship the members of this community would not hesitate to say, "We are no longer strangers, we are one people in God's one world."¹⁰ In a sharing community the spirit of fellowship and love of others compels its members to care and show their love towards one another. This spirit of fellowship

⁸ Mark 8:35, RSV.

⁹ Luke 3:10.

¹⁰ Enquist, *Namibia*, p 133

however, is only real when love is seen at work, when it crosses the frontiers and responds to the need of others.

The Christian community is marked visibly when sacrificial acts of love for others are at work:

Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of wickedness, to do undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover [that one] and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? . . . If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.¹¹

The sacrifice occurs however, not in terms of a ransom, but as a responsible action for sparing the life of others. As a caring community, Christians are counted compassionate when they take upon themselves the sufferings of those who are despised, desolate and oppressed. For this reason, Christians, as Christ's visible community of love, should be present in critical situations to act and to care. In this way oppressed people might realize the incarnational love of God in daily life. The Christian community as the light of the world, therefore, should not hide and keep silent in the presence of social evil. If the Christian community remains silent or acts contrary to its call, then, in the words of Bonhoeffer, it takes "flight into the invisible, and denies the call."¹²

Precisely in the midst of social evil is where the Christian community should be reminded of its task, as Kameeta puts it, to be "a living witness . . . and to proclaim with [its] existence, the new community [fellowship of all] in [Christ]." The Christian community should shine its

¹¹Isaiah 58:6-8, 9-10.

¹²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 132.

light by pulling down evil powers and all destructive schemes of any evil ideology. In so doing, the Christian community should lift up the oppressed, poor, and despised from the dust of humility. This is how the church calls the world to "see and learn from [its] new essence of community, the new community of liberated people who belong together in worship and life."¹³

If we apply this to the situation of Namibia before independence, then the Christian community is called to be the light of the world by standing against the reality and darkness of the apartheid system. In this way the city on a hill in Namibia fulfills its call, in Katjavivi's words, to "witness to God's redeeming and liberating love through sharing the suffering of the oppressed."¹⁴ For Christians to act in love means to challenge any evil system and destroy any walls of animosity created among the people. Christian responsibility means to shed light for social change in every situation in which God's people are discriminated against or humiliated by any false ideology. The walls of animosity that Jesus destroyed should be seen not only in a spiritual sense, but also as social reality. In the light of Christ, Christians should denounce evil systems as unacceptable before God. Evil systems should be destroyed completely so that people in society may live in peace with each other. In so doing, the church of Christ on earth destroys the walls of animosity so that scattered humanity might be gathered from the so-called "'first', 'second' and 'third' worlds into the One World in which God created all of us in God's own image."¹⁵

¹³Kameeta, *Why O Lord*, p. 7.

¹⁴Katjavivi, *Church and Liberation*, p. 144.

¹⁵Kameeta, *Why O Lord*, p. 7.

The ideology of apartheid is both a social evil and a theological heresy. As Bonhoeffer reminds us:

A Church which no longer takes the rejection of false teaching seriously no longer takes truth, i.e. its salvation, seriously and ultimately no longer takes the community seriously, no matter how pious or well-organized it may be. Any one who follows false teaching, indeed who simply supports it and furthers it, no longer obeys Christ.¹⁶

In times of crisis, therefore, urgent actions are to be taken up promptly, so that the church can respond to the needs of the suffering and spare the life of the community. In so doing, Christ's reality is indispensable for the Christian community in order that Christians might "preach the word of God for decision and for discerning the spirits." Therefore, as the church, Christians should be ready to serve as Christ's followers "at the outbreak of any new emergency." Christians should be ready to go where their services are needed whatever "the external circumstances might be."¹⁷

In time of crisis, Christians are to realize their duty of affirming the message of Christ's peace. They are to affirm this hidden peace with God not only within their Christian community, but also before the world of nations. In so doing, however, Christians are not expected to obey a heretical church or tyrannical domination, but should remain undisturbed by those false teachings for the sake of God's will. The Christian warning is truly worthy. "Avoid a heretical [person]"¹⁸ because a heretical person leads a community astray.¹⁹ The truth remains

¹⁶Bonhoeffer cited De Gruchy and Villa Vincencio, *Apartheid Is Heresy*, p. 82

¹⁷Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Way to Freedom: Letters, Lectures, and Notes, 1935-1939* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 30.

¹⁸Titus 3:10.

¹⁹2 Tim. 3: 6f.

for all generations that to obey a heretical church or tyrannical government is to disobey Christ. For Christ's sake those who realize the moment of truth must disobey the heretical church or tyrannical government because such institutions at that moment are no longer functioning from God's ordained will. They have become the dragon or the beast and false prophet.²⁰

Therefore when the visible community is compared with the leaven in the loaf, the salt of the earth, the light set upon the hill, the purpose is to point to the significant role that the church has to play in the transformation of a society. As the leaven transforms the bread, the light changes the darkness, and the salt improves the food, so Christian community is an indispensable power of Christ in transforming a society. For that reason, Christians must work in and through the society to increase the good, and decrease the evil in the world.

2.2. Christian Responsibility and Deputyship

The question of responsibility always arises in the midst of a situation that demands an ethical decision. The reality of the situation motivates a person to reflect and seek the ways and means to act. Therefore, the responsible person finds him/herself confronted by the question: "What I am to do?" This is a question that springs from responsible deputyship. Wherever there are basic human needs, the members of the community are obliged to help. As Proverbs says, "Do not hold back good from those who are entitled to it, when you possess the power to do it." Again, "Open your mouth for the dumb, for the rights of all who are left desolate."²¹

²⁰ Cf Rom. 13:1ff and Rev. 13:1ff

²¹ Prov 3:27 & 31:8.

This justice which does not hold back good and speaks for the rights of those unable to speak for themselves is the basic norm for social behavior. Members of the community, therefore, are expected to maintain justice and do good for society, which is to act responsibly. To do this is to function as a deputy of Christ. Responsible deputyship means acting according to the norms of justice and truth.

The question arises: What does it mean to be a deputy in the midst of social upheaval and struggle? What is the role of the deputy? What does it mean to open one's mouth for the rights of the dumb in a situation where rights are interpreted as subjective rights but not as God given rights?

The statement "Open your mouth for the dumb" reminds Christians of the responsibility of office for others. This office consists of responsible actions in caring for oneself and for the life of others. It is to take responsibility to care for individuals or groups of people whom we realize are in need of our help. Therefore, the nature of the office of deputy is to stand for the oppressed, poor, and desolate ones, and all those who are unable to act as a result of socio-political or religio-economic factors. The ethical task of deputyship is to release the burdens of others. "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."²²

As deputy, every Christian is an agent in Christ's office. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." The Christian acts with a purpose to foster Christ's ministry of love whatsoever the situation might be, so that the world may declare "the wonderful deeds of him" and be transformed "into the marvelous light."²³ To foster Christ's

²²Gal. 6:2.

²³1 Pet. 3:9

ministry of love, and to proclaim God's wonderful deeds in Christ Jesus is to love every person as that person is, and to see that justice is fully maintained for each one. For this reason Christians are expected to act justly for all God's people, and to share concerns, wisdom, and burdens.

This deputyship is not only confined to the Christian community, but deputyship is an office of love open for all human beings. It is everyone's task of solidarity in God's global mission, in which all are required to show compassion and solidarity with their fellow human beings. Therefore "deputy" is a universal office in the service of the world. The church in Jerusalem shared with others the wisdom it had and the gifts of the Spirit. The community of Antioch shared with other Christian communities the service of expansion of Christ's liberating message into the world.²⁴ For this reason, responding to the call of solidarity and acting for justice means experiencing the life of others under threat. Those who work for freedom and human dignity in society are acting as deputies, because freedom and human dignity are essential parts of the Good news Jesus preached.

.... He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.
 He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives.
 recovering of sight to the blind,
 set at liberty those who are oppressed,
 proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.²⁵

Deputyship, however, can only be realized by concrete right actions, when the community sacrifices its "own life for the other [people]" who live in despair and poverty.²⁶ As

²⁴2 Cor. 8:9ff.

²⁵Luke 3.18-19

²⁶Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 225.

Peter declares; "hold unfailing your love for one another. . . . Practice hospitality ungrudging to one another. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."²⁷

Responsible deputyship is realized only in responsible actions. The person who acts irresponsibly cannot be fit for this office. To be responsible is to maintain a strong relationship with others and to care for the other's need. In Bonhoeffer's words: "Responsibility, as a life and action, is essentially a relation of [person] to [person]. Christ became man, and He thereby bore responsibility and deputyship for [people]."²⁸

The true deputy cannot be silent when the office of love is attacked and destroyed by the wicked. The cannot accept any bribe to misuse the office of deputyship nor be neutral when the life of the community is in danger. Colin Winter, a missionary and an Anglican bishop in Namibia, was an example of responsible deputyship when he defended his office against the ideology of apartheid: "I cannot confine myself to a gospel which excludes the widow and oppressed, together with the despised and downtrodden."²⁹ He knew that Christ's agency has no room for compromise with evil. The true deputy is the one who is faithful to the gospel of Christ--the good news for all people--the one who hears the cries of the oppressed and acts justly to free them from the oppressive and unjust system. The Christian community has what Auala calls the duty of "perform[ing] the pastoral and watchman's office"³⁰ for the welfare of the

²⁷1 Pet. 4:8-10.

²⁸Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, p. 226.

²⁹David Soggot, *Namibia: The Violent Heritage* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 52

³⁰Leonard N. Auala, *The Ovambo: Our Problems and Hopes* (Pasadena: California Institute of Technology, 1973), p. 30.

community. For that reason Christians should take their prophetic vocation seriously as the scriptures declare: "I have made you a watchman into the house of Israel, therefore hear the word of my mouth and give them warning from me."³¹

The duty of the Christian community is to relate the gospel's message to all people. The gospel is the "good news" that calls for transformation of society. The gospel of peace brings people of different nations together: "For in Christ Jesus you are all sons [and daughters] of God, through faith As many of you were baptized in Christ who have put on Christ."³² Under unity in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; but all are one."³³ Therefore, the Christian community should not keep silent whenever it sees God's people are divided and set apart by racial discrimination based on ethnicity or color, but should, as did the leaders of two Lutheran churches in 1971, stand up and tell those who create such policy that "we cannot do other wise than regard Namibia, with all groups as a unity."³⁴

Responsible deputyship does not mean submission to any and every authority. Rather, it means that the Christian community should denounce apartheid as a social sin that stands diametrically opposed to Christian unity, a unity of all who confess Jesus Christ as the Lord of the whole creation. Bonhoeffer, the modern martyr is an example of such deputyship. He sacrificed himself by defending the rights of "those who suffer violence and injustice" under the

³¹Ezek. 3:17-21.

³²Gal. 3:27-28.

³³Eph. 2:13-18.

³⁴"Open Letter to Prime Minister Vorster" of June 30, 1971, signed by two church leaders, Bishop Leonard Auala of the Evangelical Lutheran Owambo-Kavango Church and Moderator Paul Gowaseb of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa.

Nazi authorities in Germany.³⁵ Two examples from recent Namibian history are Bishop Leonard Auala and Moderator Paul Gowaseb who risked their lives "for the truth and for a better future for the suffering people" in Namibia.³⁶

The office of deputyship is not a figurative ideal, but a reality, a real office of love. As the first epistle of John says, "The love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent God's son into the world, so that we might live through him Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."³⁷ From this office of love, God's people are sent into the world to make the love of God known and acknowledged by the world. They are sent within society to heal and to do justice--to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out the demons.³⁸

2.3. A Christian and Servanthood

Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.³⁹

Is this passage not a form of neo-colonialism? Is it not a denial of human rights? What kind of an ideology is being taught by the Christian community? Isn't this slavery?

³⁵Larry L. Rasmussen, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 37.

³⁶The "Epistle to the Namibians," signed by Bishop Auala and Moderator Gowaseb, was sent to their congregations and members on the same day that the "Open Letter" was sent to South African Prime Minister Vorster.

³⁷1 John 4:8-11.

³⁸Matt. 10:8.

³⁹Mark 10:43-45.

In South Africa and Namibia the New Testament's understanding of servanthood has been much misused with regard to enslaving and to making oppressed people obey the structures of their oppressors. The meaning of the text has been twisted into the ideology of domination and the practice of slavery. For that reason the questions stand: Does Jesus really apply the word "slave" in a derogatory manner? Does Jesus maintain that there should be some people who practice slavery over their fellow human beings?

It is true that in Jesus' time, slavery was considered a "normal" social phenomenon. But Jesus never thought of servanthood as a means to propagate slavery. Rather, he used the word "servant" to point to a change in behaviour which he was recommending. In God's service there is neither slave nor master but all stand before God on an equal footing. Whatever a person's social status might be, all are brought into one body.⁴⁰ Therefore, the servanthood that Jesus is speaking about is his suffering, which is itself a liberating act toward reconciliation.

Instead of being served as the Prince of peace, and King of kings, Jesus took the servant role of washing the disciples' feet, touching the lepers, befriending despised women and children. He rejected the image of status and privilege, taking upon Himself the task of servitude and served the table within the community of God. In Christ, therefore, the Christian community is brought freely into careful service, in which every member serves each other member. Christians are given an equal life and equal opportunity to serve. In this equalization of life every human being is to serve free from status, ambition, and privilege: "As many of you

⁴⁰See 1 Cor. 12:13 and Col. 3:11.

were baptized into Christ, you put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free; there can be no male nor female; for you are all one in Christ."⁴¹

In Christ, the Christian community is set free to serve God and all human beings. That is, in the words of De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, people are free to "minister to human need in whatever circumstances and forms it appears, and to insist that all be done with justice."⁴² Christians in community are free to serve all God's people without discriminating against anybody based on skin color, language, race or creed. In this service there is no room for apathy and silence when one sees that the life of a fellow human being is brought into question. Apathy has no room in Christian community because the love of God compels Christians to sacrifice their life for others. The love of God obliges people to stand in solidarity to defend the rights of those who are suffering. This is the servanthood for which Auala and Gowaseb appealed: "We feel compelled to present you a combined letter of strong protest regarding certain practice which evidently are frequent during the interrogation of the Namibian people [who are] taken into custody."⁴³

In the struggle for Namibian independence, Christians who tasted the love of God could not keep silent in the face of oppression and injustice. People stood in solidarity with the oppressed, and joined with them in their fight for human rights. Good servants are not only those who love and stand in solidarity with oppressed people, but those who suffer with them,

⁴¹Gal. 3:27.

⁴²De Gruchy and Villa-Vicencio, *Apartheid Is Heresy*, p. 149.

⁴³Green, Kiljunen, and Kiljunen, *Namibia*, p. 136.

and stand side-by-side with them as servants of liberation. Those are faithful servants of the suffering who act to liberate them from their bondage.

Where free care, life, and servanthood are expressed is where Christian community acts for suitable social change. Where Christian community takes the role of the Old Testament prophets and of Jesus Christ, there all people of God in the world are served. This servanthood is what Manas Buthezi calls "the redemptive suffering" which is suffering after the model of Christ to serve others. As he noted:

This suffering is not an end in itself but is endured in the course of a struggle to realize the wellbeing of the others. The power to endure this suffering comes out of love and seeks to realize the objective that lies beyond suffering, namely liberation.⁴⁴

2.4. Toward a Theology of Social Ethics

Hearing Jesus' social teaching, "I have come that all may be whole,"⁴⁵ is often marvelous news for oppressed people. For the oppressed, it is a striking announcement that moves them to believe and acknowledge that Christ is the true herald who speaks the full gospel of life. An announcement of the gospel which includes a relevant message to the oppressed is seen as truly good news, for the wholeness of life is known to include friendship and love, life and labor, and the possibility of sharing with others what we have been given as human beings. This concept

⁴⁴Manas Buthezi, "The Significance of the Christian Institute for Black South Africa," *Lutheran World Information* (June, 1975), p. 6.

⁴⁵John 10:10.

is expressed by Boesak when he says that "wholeness [is] fulfillment and recognition of the human-beingness."⁴⁶

Jesus's message of wholeness of life challenges Christians to discover and implement the full gospel for all God's creation. It challenges the church of Christ to discover the gospel of liberation and hope for human fulfillment and wholeness. Christ's liberating gospel is the hope of oppressed people in the struggle against the blind and dumb "god," the "god of mammon" who could not see injustice within society. For the gospel to be good news for Africans, it must speak against colonial and economic imperialism and racial discrimination. As Isaiah Shembe said.

You have been told of a god who cannot see you, who has no hands to heal, who has no feet to walk among you. . . . [I] tell you of a God who has eyes to see you, hands to heal you, feet to walk among you, a God who has love and compassion.⁴⁷

Shembe's ethical theology reminds Christians to ponder a new social ethics that presents God as a true living God, the living God who sees human suffering, relates to human daily living, and liberates and gives the gift of human wholeness. The living and merciful God neither refuses to recognize human-beingness nor breaks up the wholeness of life as did the racial "god" who refused to recognize the rights of the oppressed people and broke up the wholeness of their life as created beings. Shembe's ethical theology challenges Christians to realize the living God, who sees and views all people as human beings and identifies with them in their fight for justice, as the true God who stands against suffering and dehumanization.

⁴⁶Allan Boesak, *Black and Reformed: Apartheid, Liberation and the Calvinist Tradition* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1984), p. 43.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 50.

Indeed, God is the living God who walks with the people, a God who moves through the life of Abraham and comes to Moses, going with him to Egypt to lead his people out of oppression into freedom. Biblical history has many examples showing how God revealed the Self socially to the community. The theology of Immanuel⁴⁸ is another example of God's actual involvement in society with the people. Immanuel is the God who shares the condition of an oppressed humankind, the God "who bore our griefs and carried our sorrows [pains]."⁴⁹

The theology of incarnation shows God's sociality in the person of Jesus Christ when God became a human being, shared life and death, and voluntarily experienced the suffering of humankind. This is the very centre of the incarnation: "The Word become flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth: we have beheld his glory."⁵⁰ The incarnation of the Word of God in Jesus of Nazareth is part of the same dynamic social relation of God and human community. It is essential for Jesus to be that human reality in order to prove the reality of God among people. In Christ God is revealed as the social God who created a strong relational kinship with human community and promised to keep this relationship. "I am with you always, to the close of age."⁵¹

Therefore, Christ's call is not a call into a monastic or individualistic life, but is a call to join a restored relationship which is the new life of fellowship in social community. This fellowship takes form in a community called into a covenant with God. Belonging to this

⁴⁸See Isaiah 7:14.

⁴⁹Isaiah 53:4

⁵⁰John 1:14.

⁵¹Matt. 28:28.

partnership or communion in Christ is one of the most significant aspects of Christian faith in which Christians respond to God's love and experience God's reality in their daily life situations. Therefore, Christians are called to be in fellowship with every one of God's people whatever their religion or political affiliation. A Christian is called to be in communion with all of God's people.

In *The Meaning of Paul for Today*, C. H. Dodd views this partnership or communion in Christ as "a community of persons who bear one another's burdens, who seek to build up one another as thoroughly in relation to one another as they have in their communion with Christ."² With the same concept Brunner argued in *The Misunderstanding of the Church* that the early church was not an administrative legalistic institution at all, but the New Testament "Church" was "a pure communion of persons." The real "communion of fellowship with Christ . . . [which] meant also a communion of members with one another."³

A communion with God which is not also a communion with other people is a false social-ethical theology. Properly speaking, Christ restored the communion of God and humankind which puts an end to isolation and legalistic imperatives. The New Testament theology of *koinonia Christou* and *koinonia pneumatou*, as the body of Christ, is a pure communion of persons entirely without legalistic character, but a communion guided by relationship according to God's love. It is a community of people who come together in acts of significant co-operation which involves both giving and receiving. "Bear one's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" is God's relational love that is also the basic principle of the new

²C. H. Dodd, *The Meaning of Paul for Today* (London: George Allen & Associates, 1972), p. 144.

³Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 17

community in Christ. This basic principle of relationship of God-human love guides the human community to take up their social responsibility toward others. It compels Christians to exercise a concrete solidarity with the outcast and poor, as well as with those who are neglected by any oppressive structures of social order.

The Christian community is to realize that it is their social responsibility in Christ to redeem the world. This redeeming of the world does not mean that the church becomes Christ, but that Christians become tools in the hands of Christ, the Lord of social history. The words of Bonhoeffer remind people,

We are certainly not Christ, and we are not called to redeem the world by our own deeds and our own suffering. We should not assume impossible burdens and then torment ourselves that we cannot carry them. We are not Lords, but the tools in the hands of the Lord of history.⁵⁴

Christians are the sharing community in which the action of compassion for the outcast is a criteria to be lived concretely, particularly in a critical situations. This fellowship, however, should only be lived concretely when the community takes upon itself the suffering of others for Christ's sake. In Christ, the Christian community is to act out of love and unite its fellow human beings in a restored relationship with God. Such community has to become a real community of love in Christ and live in true love with all and for all people. This can only happen because, as Bonhoeffer says, "God has loved the real [human being] and has taken him[/her] to [the Self]."⁵⁵

The love of God is eternally social, and it is the basic ground for all human sociality and mutuality. Since the creation of God is a society of social beings, the love of God, as an

⁵⁴Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *I Loved this People* (John Knox Press: Richmond, 1966), p. 34

⁵⁵Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, p. 14.

ultimate power, should be the driving force in shaping the social order. This love should not only express itself in the family bond, but also as the love that crosses boundaries when it serves others with the purpose of creating the good social community.

CHAPTER 3

CONSPIRACY AND ETHICS: A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN RESISTANCE

3.1. Conspiracy?

Why does the word conspiracy appear in this chapter? Is there any room for a theory of conspiracy against the authorities in Christian ethics? If it is true that ethics is a study of good and evil, right and wrong, then it seems necessary to discuss the ethics of conspiracy, especially if resistance to oppression is deemed an ethical good. Before dealing with further discussion of a community in resistance, some light needs to be shed on what is meant by "conspiracy" and how a conspiracy can be seen as a moral option.

The term "conspiracy" has its original root in the Latin word *conspiratio*. *Cassel's Latin Dictionary* defines the word *conspiratio* as "to blow together", "to breathe together", "to sound together" or "to harmonize in opinion and feeling".¹ The Latin word *coniuro/rare* is related. The term *coniurare* denotes swearing together. This word carries two different connotations, a positive and a negative. In its positive sense the word means to take an oath, to unite together by oath. In its negative sense it describes the act of plotting or conspiring.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines "conspire" as "to combine privily for an evil or unlawful purpose; to agree together to do something criminal, or illegal."² In this chapter, the

¹*Cassel's Latin Dictionary*, Latin-English, ed. by D. P. Simpson (New York: Macmillan, 1959), p. 135, 141.

²*The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second Edition, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1989), Vol. III, p. 783

use of the word "conspiracy" underlines the act of taking an oath, or taking a stand for a just cause to unite together a broken society.

The ethic of conspiracy seems to be an irrelevant issue as far as Christian teachings are concerned, particularly when it is discussed within the context of Lutheran theology which stresses the radical doctrine of justification by faith alone. Because Lutheran teaching portrays a Christian as a person who is totally dependent on God, it proposes that everything which contradicts the gospel should be changed through a new consciousness created by preaching and teaching the gospel rather than through social conflict.

In his first treatise on the Peasants' War of 1525, "Admonition to Peace",³ Martin Luther's critique of the nobility was harsh: ". . . [A]s temporal rulers you do nothing but cheat and rob the people so that you may lead a life of luxury and extravagance. The poor people cannot bear it any longer." Therefore, the peasants were instruments of divine wrath: "The sword is already at your throats God's wrath has already come because of your error and blasphemy." While Luther could not support the tactics chosen by the peasants, he could see that their demand against an economic injustice called a "death tax" was a just cause. On this basis, Luther pointed out the injustice of the rulers who acted unfaithfully because they had not been, in his words, "appointed to exploit their subjects for their own profit and advantage." On the contrary, they were supposed to work for the welfare of their subjects.⁴ After this Luther

³*Luther's Works* (American Edition), Vol. 46, pp. 17-43.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 19.

both advocated putting down the revolt through violence where necessary⁵ and expressed disgust for the bloodlust of the nobility in their repression of the rebellion:

But those furious, raving, senseless tyrants, who even after battle cannot get their fill of blood, and all their lives ask scarcely a question about Christ, these I did not understand to instruct. It makes no difference to these bloody dogs whether they slay the guilty or the innocent, whether they please God or the Devil. They have sword, but they will use it to vent their lust and self-will. I leave them to the guidance of their master, the Devil, who is indeed leading them.⁶

For Luther's ethics, Christian life on earth remains under the shadow of the cross. The Kingdom of God does not appear on earth, but remains hidden with Christ in heaven. If this is the case, then how can we understand the ethic of the Kingdom as a criterion to be lived and as a social ethics that visibly transform the world?

Bonhoeffer attempted to amplify the Lutheran ethical tradition when he argued that ethics should be a matter of history which speak to the earthly person. "Ethics," he remarked "is not simply something which has descended from heaven to earth, but rather a child of the earth."⁷ Christian ethics, as a child of the earth, is one way to articulate the speaking of God to people, which is the way of love in Christ, the way of the cross. In relation to others, therefore, this way of love in Christ reminds us always that we stand before God's face and that God's grace rules us. We are at God's disposal in the world and so we must act and work for God.⁸

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 63-85.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁷Dietrich Bonhoeffer *No Rusty Swords: Letters, Lectures and Notes 1928-1936* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 40

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 42.

If the gospel ethic demands that we be persons for others, that is, that we be conformed to Jesus Christ, then questions arise: What actions ought one take in a situation coopted by evil and injustice, in which people recognize the failure of politicians in their responsibilities? What attempts ought one make, in a situation of tyrannical rule, in order to provide, again, space for human community? These are not idealistic questions but real questions that arise in situations when human life is in question. In Namibia, under South Africa's tyrannical rule, the Christian community confronted these questions. As they were articulated by Kameeta they are:

What is the responsibility of the Church in this kind of situation? Does the Church have anything to say? Should the Church only be concerned about what is to come? Or should the Church be the foretaste of the Kingdom of God? Should the Church keep quiet in view of the suffering of the people, in view of the injustice?⁹

These practical questions sprang from the concrete experience of a critical situation where the usual standards of right and order are turned upside down. Christians were awakened by their Christian faith to discover that the official policy of racial discrimination and apartheid which the South African government maintained was in conflict with the biblical faith. The purpose of the "law and order" that the South African government proclaimed was not to maintain the health and welfare of society, but to punish those who were doing good and praise those who were doing wrong.¹⁰ The point of such "law and order" was to ban or to kill those who struggled for justice, peace, and genuine reconciliation on the basis of their Christian faith. These were also charged with treason and subversion. For those who supported apartheid, who aided and abetted the evildoers in their evil ways, this "law and order" was there to assure that

⁹Kameeta, *Why O Lord*, p. vii.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

they would be rewarded with money and power and be awarded seats in a parliament where they could call themselves "servants of God".¹¹

What kind of attitude should Christians take toward governments that not only turn law and order upside down, but even use force in maintaining such oppression? Could such a government claim to be God's servant when it is exploiting and oppressing God's people? Should one prescribe non-violence for one group of Christians--those who are being oppressed--while not saying anything at all to the group of Christians which supports and benefits from institutional violence against the first group? To whom is the Apocalypse addressed when it warns, "Any one [who] slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain"?¹² Is it not speaking of those tyrannical dragons, beasts and their representatives? Also the letter to the Hebrews states that whoever violates the Law dies without mercy.¹³ If they are to be slain by the sword, who is to do that? Surely the answer would be God. If it is God, how will God do it? Calvin, perhaps, was correct when he stated that "the avengers from among God's servants"¹⁴ will remove the unjust rulers.

3.2. A Christian and The Right to Resist.

In Namibia and South Africa "'turn the other cheek' became a [supposedly] divine command to the slaves and servants to accept flogging and blows obsequiously." The call to be

¹¹Allan Boesak, *Comfort and Protest* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1987), p. 100.

¹²Rev. 13.

¹³Heb. 10:28.

¹⁴Boesak, *Comfort and Protest*, p. 100.

a nonviolent community was used to make people passive and nonresistant. Christians were taught to "bear suffering patiently" rather than analyze the roots of the problem. "The love of enemies" was twisted to "render blacks compliant from the very heart, forgiving every injustice with no thought of changing the system."¹⁵

Does Jesus' teaching about turning the other cheek really mean passivity? Did he not suggest a responsible resistance as opposed to irresponsible resistance? What right does the Christian community possess? Is it a subjective right, or is it an objective right? Is the nonresistant life part of the nature of Christian community? Are not the nonresistant life and apathy in the midst of injustice and oppression an affirmation of the evil system?

The Christian community has been given an objective duty by Christ to resist the power of evil. This objective duty is in the nature of the gospel, which is God's power for humankind. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith."¹⁶ Elsewhere St. Paul calls the community to resist the evil powers and principalities.¹⁷ For the Christian community, therefore, to be passive and not to resist structural evil built into the system is a betrayal of the message of "good news." Again, St. Paul says, "For freedom has Christ set you free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery."¹⁸

¹⁵Walter Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa: A Revolutionary New Approach to Theology for a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1987), p. 5

¹⁶Rom. 1:16-17.

¹⁷See Eph. 6:10-15.

¹⁸Gal. 5:1.

By this specifically Christian teaching, and also by the demand of necessity, the Christian community is compelled to act out of love to save the lives of others. Christians who close their eyes to such a demand and remain passive in the presence of injustice and suffering are acting from selfishness and are not responding to the demands of discipleship. Those who play an apathetic role in the critical situation where another's life is in question are not acting responsibly. As Bonhoeffer observed: "To refuse to engage oneself in the demands of necessity would be the selfish act of one who cared more for his[her] own innocence than . . . for . . . guilty brothers [and sisters]." ¹⁹

The Christian community is freed from this selfish lust for its own purity and brought into a life of caring for one another and for all people. Therefore it cannot remain silent and close its eyes when it sees people robbed of the Creator's gift of justice. Sympathy and love for others forces or directs this community to resist injustice. Love for others compels the disciple community to sacrifice and risk its life "for the suffering brothers [and sisters] for whose sake Christ suffered." ²⁰

Those whom Christ liberated cannot remain unmoved when they see the pain, suffering, and shed blood of other human beings. No one of any conscience will remain inactive in the midst of an evil system. The act of resistance for the sake of justice, peace and human rights in the midst of such an evil system is inevitable. So it would be an irresponsible action for Christians not to defend their own belongings or the property of others when it becomes prey to robbers. They also have the objective right and duty to protect their community and have the

¹⁹ Rasmussen, *Bonhoeffer and Reality*, p. 37.

²⁰ Bonhoeffer, *I Loved This People*, p. 34.

responsibility to use any moral means to defend the church against an unjust aggressor. As the scripture declares, "The zeal for your house will consume me."²¹

3.3. A Christian and Civil Disobedience.

There is Oshiwambo maxim which reminds the authorities of their responsibility toward their subjects: *Aantu oya Pamba, Muryembala okwe ya pewa kuNampongo* (People are God's, the King is given them by God.). These words remind every institution and religious or secular authority of their duty to carry out their mandate properly for the sake of all God's people. The saying reflects the nature of the king's mandate over the subjects as God given. Therefore, God expects this power to be used rightly for good order. As Bonhoeffer summarizes the ideas of the Reformation: "The sword which God has given to the government is to be used by it in order to protect [people] against the chaos which is caused by sin. Government is to punish the criminal and to safeguard life." Therefore government has divine authority to maintain justice.²² The Augsburg Confession says: "[A]ll government in the world and all established rule and laws were instituted and ordained by God for the sake of good order. . . ."²³ From this one can conclude that when governments fail to maintain law and order justly and properly, they are no longer profitable for their office. Certainly they are not using their mandate according to God's ordained will. Such a government should be corrected so that it may exercise its power for the good of all people in accord with God's vision of just fulfillment for all creation.

²¹John 2:17.

²²Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, p. 335.

²³ Article XVI (German). Theodore Tappert *et al.*, eds. and trs., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 37, #1.

Christians are also called to obey the authorities because they are set up for good order.

The Augsburg Confession maintains that Christians engage in civil affairs for God's sake:

It is taught among us that . . . Christians may without sin occupy civil offices . . . [and] render decisions and pass sentence according to imperial and others existing laws

The gospel does not overthrow civil authority, the state, and marriage, but requires that all these be kept as true orders of God²⁴

It is true that Christians should engage in civil office, and it is right that Christians obey governments in the world for purposes of good order. Questions arise when Christians experience authorities whose law and behaviour run contrary to what the nature of government ought to be. In such cases, is it permissible for Christians to disobey? What should the Christian community do about oppression? What is the responsibility of the Christian community toward oppressive authorities who misuse their mandate? What responsibility does the church have to people whose lives are under the threat of diabolical, tyrannical, or heretical authorities?

In the case of oppressive rule, the ethical question is not how to submit, but to what must one submit? To whom does the Christian community owe obedience? Is it God's will that Christians obey oppressive laws? Should Christians obey simply because of fear of punishment? What does it mean to say that Christians should obey God rather than earthly authority?

The Christian community is characterized by *koinonia*: fellowship and the spirit of oneness. It is a community that is directed by the Spirit of compassion. For that reason, in every aspect of life the Christian has a vocation of responsibility toward the authorities and toward all their fellow citizens. Every member of the Christian community has been given a

²⁴*Ibid.*, p. 37-38, 2 & 5.

positive responsibility or mandate to work for justice within society. The command to submit to secular government reflects God's desire that "the basic structures of the society be instruments of good for His creation."²⁵ Citizens of a polity have the duty to obey just laws because government itself is the one of the elements of God's plan to preserve human community in good order. Because God's plan includes both preservation and ultimate consummation in Christ, the Christian community cannot submit to the extent of being conformed to the principalities and powers of this world and their institutions. For example, whenever the dominant authority maintains a policy of racial separation, then it is the task of the Christian who knows that it is God's plan to bring all things together in Christ is to work for the development of a just unity in society. The command to establish justice and peace in society is also directed to the church for "recovering God's purpose for human society."²⁶

When governments are involved in practicing injustice against members of society, the Christian community can be a forum for constructive confrontation to draw public attention to the good of all. Bonhoeffer suggests three possible ways in which the Christian community can provide this service to the state. First, the Christian community can ask the state whether its actions can be justified as legitimate actions of the state. This means that the Christian community has to remind the state to act responsibly in leading people to law and order but not to lawlessness and disorder. Second, the Christian community can aid the victims of state action. Bonhoeffer here reminds the Christian community of its unconditional obligation to the victims of any ordering of society, whether they belong to the church or not. As the scriptures

²⁵Stephen Charles Motto, *Biblical Teaching and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 142.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 142.

say; "Do good to all." Third, the Christian community can take direct political action. "The third possibility is not just to bandage the victims under the wheel, but to put a spoke in the wheel itself." This third suggestion, however, is only possible when the Christian community realizes that the state has failed in its function of creating law and order.²⁷

Authority deserves honor and obedience as long as it rules and uses its mandate for human and social well-being, and insofar as its power functions for God's purpose. If it uses its power contrary to God's ordained will, then the door of submission should be closed. Evil authority becomes what Calvin calls "gangsterism." He reminded rulers: "Your first task as a ruler is to build your kingdom on justice . . . but if you allow yourself to be misled . . . you make yourself a participant in injustice and your government will be nothing else but gangsterism."²⁸

Calvin is right. True authority functions in line with God's will for peace, reconciliation, and justice. Since government is a minister of God to provide people with an orderly and healthful life, it should not rule according to its own mandate, but for the public good. Government is responsible to God and to people in the practice of its power. If authority is used contrary to these elements, then it is no longer legitimate, but has become a *botsotso*, "robber." In Augustine's words, the authority becomes "a gang of robbers." He stated; "justice is the only thing that can give worth to worldly power. What is worldly government if justice is lacking? It is nothing other than a bunch of plunderers."²⁹ Where there is no justice, honor vanishes, and

²⁷Bonhoeffer, *No Rusty Swords*, pp. 223-225.

²⁸Cited in Allan Boesak and Charles Villa-Vicencio, *When Prayers Make News* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), p. 150

²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 150.

where honor has vanished, authority has lost its civil righteousness and becomes an evildoer. This sort of authority has to be avoided. In his book *By The Rivers Of Babylon*, Kaj Munk, a Danish pastor and a fighter in resistance to Hitler, reminded us: "It is better to damage Denmark's relationship with Germany than to damage Denmark's relationship with Jesus Christ."³⁰ Similarly, it is better for Christians today to damage their relationship with the oppressive government than to damage their relationship with Christ. Also in regard to unjust governments the biblical slogan remains valid: "We have to obey God rather than [people]."³¹

3.4. Responsibility to Disobey.

The Christian who is not concerned sufficiently with justice, peace, love, and reconciliation--especially for the very poor, the wronged and the oppressed--disobeys the Lord and denies the "good news." Christians are not only to be known for the practice of their piety, but also for the fruit of their faith when it shows in action through socio-political compassion. Christians are not placed in the world to serve themselves, but they are instruments to be used by God in service for the world in the world. Obedience to God is the prior element that every Christian is required to fulfill in God's service for the world. To obey God does not require certain laws that Christians have to fulfill, but is the Gospel-inspired, spontaneous action of love for God and for other human beings. However, this does not mean that the law has no function in the life of Christians.

³⁰Kaj Munk, *By The Rivers Of Babylon* (Blair, Nebraska: Lutheran Publishing House, 1945), p. 14

³¹See Dan. 3:17-18; Acts 4:19-20.

Politically speaking, the law is present in order that one may obey human laws for the sake of law and order in the world. Human laws are to be the active presence of justice. People are required to comply with the law for their well being and for the welfare of society. When law and order is used to excuse oppression and becomes the source of chaos and disorder, then Christians must witness to the fact that law and order has become the enemy of justice. As Boesak says, "The people are not there for the law, but the law, like the sabbath, is there for the sake of the people. Law and order are not the foundation of justice, but justice is the foundation of the law."³² For this reason, order is not the guardian of humanness, but humanness is the guarantee of order. For the sake of human dignity, in situations in which law and order is misused, Christians should strive for justice and work for the transformation of society to bring forth a new vision of law and order. As John De Gruchy points out, civil disobedience may well be more moral than obedience when it is intended to replace an unjust existing order with a more just new order. Christian civil disobedience is nothing other than a protest against laws that are contrary to justice for the sake of the law. De Gruchy maintains: "Just as it is the Church's task to witness to the state, so it is the Church's responsibility to decide in the light of the gospel when certain laws are so unjust that they need to be disobeyed."³³

For Martin Luther King Jr., Christian disobedience to unjust laws is a moral obligation. For the sake of moral obligation and for good conscience, Christians have to reject every unjust law that serves to dehumanize and oppress God's people. He stated this quite clearly in various

³²Boesak, *If This Is Treason*, p. 23.

³³John De Gruchy, *Bonhoeffer and South Africa: Theology in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1984), p. 115-117. Quote from p. 117.

statements of defiance of segregation laws in the southern United States: "We cannot in all good conscience obey your evil, unjust laws, because noncooperation with evil is as much as a moral obligation as in cooperation with good."³⁴

3.5. The Roots of Liberation.

Freedom is a driving force of resistance against any structural system of bondage. Often oppressed people feel strongly motivated to act for their own determination and, while working toward self determination, break the yoke of slavery in order to achieve freedom and peace. This determination and action of breaking the yoke of slavery is what freedom is about.³⁵ Some people view freedom as an individual matter in which each person has certain rights over against society and government. Others view freedom as a state that requires opportunities as well as rights, including the opportunity "to work and have a living wage, medical care, decent housing, and a good education."

Freedom is also understood as a social order where "every one is treated with an approximate equality." For those who live under colonialism, freedom is independence from foreign domination. When "freedom" is discussed among young people, freedom can mean the complete absence of parental restraints. For women freedom is interpreted not as mere independence, but rather as equality between men and women. A view of freedom inherited

³⁴Martin Luther King Jr., sermon delivered at Dexter Ave. Church, Christmas of 1957, cited in Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence*, p. 48.

³⁵The following summary and short quotations are taken from John M. Swomley, *The Politics of Liberation* (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1984), pp. 87-88.

from the Renaissance and Reformation sees freedom as a state of tolerance which "requires pluralism or . . . [a] wide a range of choices politically, economically, and culturally."

In the Jewish-Christian traditional view, freedom is portrayed as "an attempt to discern the nature of the world, to live in harmony with it rather than fight it." A Christian ethic of liberation would maintain that freedom is not rebellion against God and nature, but rather a life lived in harmony with God and other creatures. From this perspective God is not merely "king" or "dictator" whom human beings must obey, but God is a partner, leader, or parent who participates in liberation. God is a "free Being," and through freedom created a free creation that should live in harmony, love and freedom. Christ Jesus reveals the truth that God's freedom is not bound to any space, nation, or time; God remains eternally free to love creation. As Swomley affirms: "God is never a neutral or philosophical concept, but one who makes a claim on those who work with him."³⁶ Therefore, Christians who work for liberation from any bondage that enslaves and oppresses creation bear witness to the claim that God is freedom.

The theories of freedom noted above are roots of liberation thought. They have drawn their sources from Hebrew ethical thinking expressed in the creation story. The biblical story of creation pictures the origin of women and men as created in the image of God. That is to say, people are created in a state of freedom without any captivity or oppression.³⁷ God's action in creation is not subordinated to any structural bondage. "God is essentially free In freedom God created the world, a free creation God's actions in the history of this world are

³⁶*Ibid* , p 88.

³⁷Gen 1.1ff.

actions for liberation."³⁸ The story of the "fall of humanity" put forward the symbolic meaning of the surrender of people to captivity to self-interest. In the fallen state, human beings devote themselves to self-interest, and political, economic, or military interests that are oriented toward self-aggrandizement.³⁹ True freedom, on the other hand, is a positive gift that enables us to serve and honor God. In Kameeta's words, freedom is "a gift that enables human beings to withstand all oppression."⁴⁰ In so doing, we affirm the image of God in human history. In freedom people are able to act justly against everything that seeks to rob them of their God-given dignity. Christian political ethics, therefore, maintains that "all women and men can realize their full potential only through personal and political liberation, which occurs when they look at the world and their fellow creatures from the view point and concern of God."⁴¹

By enabling people to see their situation from God's perspective, Christ liberates them from self-centeredness, and enables them to liberate themselves from the political and economic structures in which they were enslaved. God will always be the God who is concerned with the liberation of human beings. God has, is, and will be taking the initiative in the struggle of human history: "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians."⁴²

³⁸Kameeta, *Why O Lord*, p. 11.

³⁹Gen. 3:1-20.

⁴⁰Cited in Enquist, *Namibia*, p. 118.

⁴¹Swomley, *Politics of Liberation*, p. 93.

⁴²Ex. 3:7-8.

Liberation is the real process of setting people free from any oppressive structures. When the Israelites were liberated from bondage to the Egyptians and transformed into an independent society or community, they were given the responsibility of fostering justice within that society. This included responsibility "to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free . . ." ⁴³

For Christians this responsibility of liberation is also revealed to us by Christ, the Redeemer, the Word of God that was in the beginning before the world.⁴⁴ Christ is the one who came to set the people free from bondage, whether social or spiritual. Should we not take the words of Scripture seriously? According to the Gospel of Luke, Christ has come "to proclaim release to the captive, recovery of sight to the blind, and to liberate those who are oppressed . . ." ⁴⁵ If this is true, in Christ the redeemed community has put off the old nature with its deeds, and put on the new nature which is renewed in the consciousness of God.⁴⁶ This community has become a new people of God's peace, in which each member is called to live in peace with God and with the rest of creation.

The politics of liberation is present to analyze and to relate to God's people the meaning and fullness of this peace. Christian political ethics understands peace as the dynamic "good news" of God's salvation which is brought about by the revolutionary words of the gospel of Christ. To speak of peace as "the good news" to the oppressed is to relate the full meaning of

⁴³Is. 58:6.

⁴⁴John 1:1-14.

⁴⁵Luke 4:18.

⁴⁶Col. 3:9-10.

peace as a condition of well-being and wholeness. Peace is seen as creating sound relationships among people and between people and God. In terms of positive social relationships, peace includes human welfare, health, and well-being both spiritually and materially. As John Driver notes, peace is "assured by the prevalence of conditions which contribute to human well-being in all its dimensions."⁴⁷

Is conspiracy, then a moral option? In terms of Christian political ethics, true peace is realized only when justice or righteousness prevails in society to assure the common welfare of all people. When people are treated with equality and respect, then salvation flourishes according to the social order determined by God in "a covenant" that God has established with the people, "a covenant of life and peace."⁴⁸ It is possible that Christian participation in a conspiracy against the current government might be the only way to maintain such a covenant. This would be especially true in situations where the government has institutionalized an evil policy such as apartheid and also hardened its heart against any call for repentance and change. Where evil is called good and good is called evil and where the forces of "law and order" only enforce an evil system, Christians might well be forced to identify with a conspiracy as the only truly moral option.

⁴⁷John Driver, *Community and Commitment* (Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1976), p. 70.

⁴⁸Mal. 2:5.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARD A CHRISTIAN SOCIAL STRATEGY FOR POLITICAL LIBERATION: A METHOD FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC ETHICS

4.1. The Church, Human Rights, and Politics.

We as Christians do not seek human rights for ourselves, but are concerned with the rights of our fellow[s].¹

The ethics of human rights can raise controversy within the Christian community, particularly when it is discussed in connection with the Lutheran doctrine of two kingdoms. Discussions of human rights have split Lutheran theologians into two groups: those who believe human rights should be part of theological discussion, and those who maintain that human rights are not a theological but a secular issue. In Carl Braaten's words, some believe that "pastors should preach the gospel and leave politics to the government."² These claim that their arguments are based on principles found in Article XXVI of the Augsburg Confession, which discusses abuse of ecclesiastical power:

The state protects not souls but bodies and goods from manifest harm, and constrains men with sword and physical penalties, while the Gospel protects souls from heresies, the devil, and eternal death

Therefore, ecclesiastical and civil power are not to be confused.³

¹"Lutheran Churches in Southern Africa," in *Lutheran World Federation and Southern Africa, A Report from the LWF Sixth Assembly, 1977, Tanzania* (Geneva: Lutheran World Federation), p. 32

²Carl E. Braaten, *Principles of Lutheran Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), p. 123.

³Tappert, *Book of Concord*, p. 82-83, 11 & 12.

The Confession in its critique of medieval abuses argues that the church ought not invade the government's function, nor transfer kingdoms nor interfere with judgement concerning any civil ordinance or contract.⁴

On the basis of this article some theologians view the participation of the church in dealing with the issue of human rights as a confusion of the two kingdoms doctrine and a mixing of the church's proper Gospel message with the secular issue of human rights.⁵ This point of view was especially prevalent in nineteenth century Germany during the time when German missionaries were coming to Namibia. The Erlangen dogmatician Christian Luthardt is an example of how theological conservatives approached the issue. He stated:

To begin with, the gospel has absolutely nothing to do with outward existence but only with eternal life, not with external orders and institutions which could come into conflict with the secular orders but only with the heart and its relationship, with the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins etc., in short, with heavenly life. . . .

This means that it is not the vocation of Jesus Christ or of the Gospel to change the orders of secular life and establish them anew. On the contrary, Christ has nothing to do with this sphere but allows it to go its own way. . . . Christianity wants to change man's heart, not his external situation, as the monastic ethic does.⁶

The conservative and mediating theologians of the nineteenth century were not alone in this point of view. For example, in arguing for the autonomy of the secular sphere, Rudolf Sohm held that the gospel should have nothing to do with the issues of public life: "The issues

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 83, 13.

⁵Braaten, *Principles*, p. 123.

⁶From *Die Ethik Luthers in ihren Grundzügen* (1867), cited in Karl H. Hertz, ed., *Two Kingdoms and One World: A Sourcebook in Christian Social Ethics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), pp. 83-84.

of public life should remain untouched by the proclamation of the gospel, completely untouched."⁷

These interpretations of the two kingdoms theory as separating a sacred sphere from a secular sphere contributed to the development of setting "the ministry of word and sacrament" into one autonomous segment of life, and "public life and human rights" into another. The disastrous results of two-sphere thinking for Germany are well known; what is not so well known is that two-sphere thinking also influenced churches in Namibia long after it had been discredited by the results of National Socialism in Germany. One example of the influence of two-sphere thinking is the reaction of the German Evangelical Lutheran Church to the "Open Letter" to the South African Prime minister concerning the abuse of human rights. This white church accused the two black Lutheran churches who wrote of exceeding the mandate of the gospel: "The German Evangelical Lutheran Church (DELK) finds herself surprised by what she views as purely a political action that, in her opinion, cannot be brought in harmony with the utterance by either of these two churches."⁸

It is not necessary, however to understand Luther's distinction of two kingdoms as saying that the church has no responsibility for addressing the moral abuses of the state in public life, nor does Luther's attack on the abuses of the Medieval papacy necessitate understanding temporal government as an autonomous entity complete in itself. Rather, Luther demands that the church address moral lapses on the part of the government.⁹ Melancthon, too, encourages

⁷Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁸Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 264.

⁹See Luther's commentary on Psalm 82, LW 13, 42-72, esp. pp. 48-51 where Luther holds that it is the duty of preachers to rebuke the sins of the rulers.

the church to show active responsibility in the service of God's rule through state and society: "The lawful civil ordinances are God's good creatures and divine ordinances in which a Christian may take part."¹⁰

The point of any ethical use of Luther's distinction of two kingdoms is to give the church freedom to proclaim the gospel of forgiveness of sins and the righteousness of God without hindrance. Therefore, Luther's teaching should not be misunderstood to mean that the church has no responsibility for the state. What Luther says is true. Both the ecclesiastical and the secular government are ordained by God. What is also true is that both the government's political and the church's ecclesiastical jurisdiction are measured according to God's righteousness. Both secular and spiritual governments have responsibilities toward each other and toward God's people. The point of the spiritual power is to produce righteousness through the preaching of Law and Gospel, and the purpose of the temporal power is to promote righteousness through external peace and the prevention of crime.¹¹

God works to preserve creation and enhance human life not only through governmental authorities, but also through all human organizations and institutions that are profitable for the welfare of society. God is the source of the liberating power which works through all agencies that serve to bring about better socio-economic conditions. God's liberating power has become a reality in history in Jesus Christ and in continuing struggles against oppression. In Christ, signs of the liberating power of God were (and still are) seen shaking off oppressive yokes, bringing joy to the hearts of the people, sowing hope for the neglected and for all people. The

¹⁰Apology, Art. XVI, Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, p. 222, 1.

¹¹For Luther's most complete statement of his views on government, see "Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed" (1523), LW 45, 81-129.

continuing presence of Christ is nothing other than God's liberating action in history for humanity. Archbishop Oscar Romero observed the active nature of God's Word in history:

We cannot separate God's word from the historical reality in which it is proclaimed It is God's word because it enlightens, contrasts, repudiates, praises what is going on today in this society.¹²

To be committed to the liberating Word of God requires a commitment to human welfare. This commitment occurs not in an abstract sense, but through the practical realities of history. To commit oneself to God's liberating Word is to challenge social evil, to point out that injustice is unfaithfulness to God, and to change unjust social structures which cause suffering and abuse of human rights.

The politics of liberation theology is not based on a false mixing of church and state, but on a view of God as the true Monarch of the whole universe. God, who is revealed in Christ Jesus as the one who is totally involved in earthly life, seeks to change and transform earthly life for the sake of human beings. For this reason liberation ethics understands God's Word as not being limited to any space, time, and reality. Rather God's Word transcends and transforms all spheres of life, not just the spiritual or personal. God's Word speaks against those who limit the rights of others. The Word of God lifts up the powerless and degraded so that they too might realize that God's grace is open to all people without regard to their achievements or their social status. The Word of God is not just a religious word addressed to disembodied souls, but the Word of liberation which challenges whole human beings to participate in God's creative work in history.

¹²Oscar Romero, *The Violence of Love: Pastoral Wisdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero*, James R. Brockman, ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), p. x.

This being the case, we can see why Johannes Lucas de Vries would say, "In a situation where a dictatorial minority holds power over the helpless majority [or vice versa], precisely there it will be enormously important that the church become the spokesman" for those who cannot speak.¹³ We can also understand why Carl Braaten would counsel the church to take liberation theology seriously in order to challenge "the traditional nature/grace scheme which has provided the ideological undergirding for the kind of partnership the church has enjoyed with the ruling minorities."¹⁴

Liberation ethics does not advocate change in order to confuse the church with politics, but it also refuses to twist the distinction of two kingdoms into an excuse for injustice. Like Luther, liberation ethics holds that both church and government are God's necessary instruments for the welfare of humanity. Liberation ethics does not attempt to change the confessional definition of the church or of the state. The ethics of liberation understands the church as "the people of God, those who confess not only that they believe that God exists, but also affirm [God's] Son Christ." In Christ the human community has "found new life, new meaning, and indeed has become a new creation."¹⁵

Liberation ethics also recognizes that the church serves a King whose kingdom is not of this world, but insists that this statement not be misunderstood. The church is the church in this world, and is nowhere called to escape the world. We must remember that, as the LWF report on Southern Africa stated, temporal institutions are not immutably fixed in their current shape

¹³Cited in Hertz, *Two Kingdoms*, p. 225.

¹⁴Braaten, *Principles*, p. 125.

¹⁵Boesak, *Treason*, p. 13.

by nature, but are God's creation and are subject to God's rule.¹⁶ God created the world to be our home and called us to participate actively in the creative work necessary to preserve and enhance this gift.

God's revealed intention for the world is that people live in just and loving communion with their Creator and with their fellow creatures, and that intention can only be fulfilled within creation. As God's chosen means of communicating the good news of salvation in Christ, the church, too, has a role in such fulfilment. As Allan Boesak says, it is "*in this world that the church must witness to God's kingdom and it is in this world that the signs of God's kingdom must be erected.*" For that reason the transformation of political structures to bring about more justice is part of the role of the church in God's mission of preservation of creation. In Boesak's words: "The political responsibility of the church is to witness to God's demand for justice and peace."¹⁷ Part of God's promise to creation is a meaningful life for all people in the world; therefore, the church whose life and ministry is rooted in God's promise in Christ has a political responsibility for the sake of peace and justice in this world.

Politics is the ordering, the organization of the institutional, social, legal, and economic life of a people. Because of the complexity of modern societies, today politics is usually carried out within a nation-state. For Boesak, politics is a very human business that has profound influence on all aspects of people's lives. It functions to "determine to a large extent the presence of justice in society, . . . [a] measure of peace in the world, . . . [a] measure of human beingness of people in a particular society." Politics is necessary "in order to create and maintain

¹⁶*LWF and Southern Africa*, p. 42.

¹⁷Boesak, *Treason*, p. 13-14.

a society which is as meaningful, just and human as possible."¹⁸ Politics is concerned with the welfare of the city, that is, "the welfare of the community of the powerless."¹⁹ The objective of politics is to create and to develop an equitable *polis* where each individual life is cared for and people's needs are responded to. Therefore, politics is necessary to help and to direct what public life should be, and what the government should do in relation to its subjects. In this sense, politics is concerned with empowering people rather than controlling them, with meeting their needs rather than exploiting them.²⁰ Although many people of the last two centuries might think of religion and politics as completely (and properly) separate entities, politics is also a significant dimension of the real world where God is at work. Politics is a dimension of life where God's people are called to respond to God's activity in history.

Since politics is an important means by which God's mission of preservation can be carried out, politics should also be the business of the church. It aims at creating a relative justice and order in a chaotic society so that God's people may be liberated to respond to the needs of their fellow human beings. Politics has to do with people to whom God has promised a fully meaningful life in Christ. This does not mean that the church should become a political party or organize campaigns for candidates. Rather it means that the line often drawn between spiritual concerns and political issues can be a false boundary. Properly understood, religion and politics have the same concerns for people. Martin Luther King, Jr., is an example of how the church could raise the issues and through its actions "create the situation which forces the

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Swomely, *Politics of Liberation*, p. 10.

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 13.

party in power to act creatively and constructively" in response to the issues on the public scene.²¹ As Dieter Hessel points out, "All spiritual-moral issues have political implications, and all political decisions have spiritual-moral implications. So we have to think both ways about 'religion and politics'." ²²

The Word of God should always provide the direction for the church, because the Word is "the critique of human actions and holds before us the norms of the kingdom of God."²³ For the political task, Paul writes to Timothy:

First of all then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all [people], for [monarchs] and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a quite and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way. This is good, and it is acceptable in the sight of God our savior who desires all [people] to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.²⁴

Christ is the Lord of all life. Therefore, there is not any dimension of life that does not fall under his lordship. As the German *Kirchliches Jahrbuch*, 1968 stated, "The service of Jesus Christ applies to the total human being in all his life-circumstances, hence also in the social and political sphere."²⁵ God's Word is indivisible and cannot be restricted to a certain department of life. God's Word serves its purpose in both personal and public life, in politics and in economics, in science and sports, in liturgy and in the arts. The Word of God should be the driving force for the church or for Christians who serve the lordship of Christ in this world. "In

²¹*Ibid*, p. 10.

²²Dieter T. Hessel, *Reconciliation and Conflict: Church Controversy over Social Involvement* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), p. 15.

²³Boesak, *Treason*, p. 14.

²⁴1 Tim. 2:1-14.

²⁵Cited in Hertz, *Two Kingdoms*, p. 199.

undertaking their political responsibility" the *Jahrbuch* continues, "Christians and churches ought not to allow themselves to be impelled by those who limit faith to the inner life" ²⁶ Those who exclude the church from dealing with social problems or, for some social or political reason, prevent the church from speaking the truth, therefore, stand against God's liberating Word, and delay the Word of liberation from fulfilling its purpose in this world.

The Word of God is the Word of liberation, and it is present in the world to redeem the world, and to set all human beings free from any social, economic, political, or religious bondage. It is the Word that liberates and preserves the world. Through the liberating Word of God, Christ has sent his church out into the world in order to bear witness to God's caring love for all people in all areas of their lives. Jesus' command is: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you. I am with you always." ²⁷ His promise of continuing presence is for every sphere of life. Christ sent his church to witness God's love and justice in all walks of life, because every segment of human activity stands under God and under God's demand for and promise of justice. Each segment of human life is to be "judged by God's justice," either in "political or social system God is the judge of all social systems." ²⁸ The church has the responsibility to witness to God's justice in means that effectively communicate the message and are consistent with the goal of the Reign of God, including politics.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 199. The statement cited also condemns turning the church into a political party.

²⁷Matt. 28:19-20.

²⁸Romero, *Violence of Love*, p. 145.

The Rule of **God** and the message of the Gospel are not intended for only one of the multitude of Life's "**spheres**." The church is called to witness to the incarnation in every segment of life, and to reveal God's righteousness to all people so that all may respond in righteousness

4.2. Humanity beyond Human Needs.

In the understanding of Southern African cultures, a human being exists as a being in relationship to other **members** of the community.²⁹ A human being is one who is called into a relationship of covenant in a community. Within this communal covenant of beings with and for each other, people are to be directed by love. This love, however, is not love in the abstract, but love that finds concrete expression in relationship with another person. Such love does not seek its own will but is a very special love, very much like the New Testament *agape*, the love which God shows to **the** undeserving. Like *Agape*, covenant-love is a demanding kind of love. It finds expression in a communal covenant where people love others unconditionally. Both the New Testament and African cultures recognize that to love others unconditionally is a most difficult task to fulfil. Yet, Christians are called to be instruments of carrying out this unconditional task for **all** humankind.

As Major Jones shows, when we bring together Christian *agape* with African culture, we have a potent ethical principle: "To be in covenant is to give room to the self and the other self to be in a kind of **high** objective relationship one to the other so that there is a yearning for

²⁹According to our tradition *Omuntu*, person, is a being in relationship or in fellowship with the whole community

mutual self-realization."³⁰ Love is a mutual concern for others, and in this love Christians are committed beyond the boundaries of their own existence. This love obliges people to serve others without the anticipation of any good accumulating to themselves, and without regard for any payment.

Within Namibian culture this unconditional love is the basic ethical mandate for all members of the social community. For Christians *agape* is both the Gospel promise that makes us what we are and the ethical mandate that describes our life as redeemed servants of God in the world. This promising and demanding love of God for humanity transforms us from unlovable humans into lovable humans. Jones says, "[O]nly by loving the other as self can one know and experience God's ultimate love."³¹ Lutherans would reverse this order. We can only be lovable persons, and love others, after we know God's love for us is unconditional love (*agape*). Realizing that this love is a gift in Christ guides us to love others.

The love of God does guide Christians to respond to the needs of others. As Jesus said, "I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, prisoner and because of your unconditional love you gave me a drink, visited me, and clothed me."³² By the love of God we are able to become stewards, and use our property properly to help those who are in need. By this love, as stewards of whole economies as well as personal property, we can make our economic system more just and fair. Economic life, too, is part of God's good creation for humanity. Through the love of God people are able to acknowledge their wealth as a blessing from God for basic

³⁰Major J. Jones, *Christian Ethics for Black Theology*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 107

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 107

³²Matt. 25:35-36, paraphrased.

human needs. "Blessed is a [person] that fears the Lord," the psalmist sings; "wealth and riches shall be in [that] house."³³

Personal and public wealth is a gift that God has given to humans that we are to use as good stewards, that is, as people who are responsible to God for the use of God's property through economic systems. Failing to use our wealth properly as good stewards is a refusal to give God glory. Good economic stewardship affirms God's richness for us and confesses God as the source of human wealth. Stewards confess with the psalmist: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."³⁴ Mahatma Gandhi is right that God produced enough for each person's daily bread. Under God's provision there is enough for each person to keep themselves alive and healthy. "If only everybody took enough for the self and not anything more," advises Gandhi, "there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no [person] dying of starvation in this world."³⁵ What Gandhi said is true. People who possess great wealth and abundance without using it properly, while millions of human beings are starving and have no clothes, are people who do not act from the law of love. This kind of person must not realize that God's provision for our needs is an act of love in which God works through human beings for human beings. God's provision is present to guide people into using wealth wisely and justly.

To use God's resources unwisely and unjustly is to neglect God's purpose for creation, and to steal from God's treasury. In such circumstances a theology of provision is needed. The theology of provision challenges those who steal from God's treasury to change their focus and

³³Ps. 112:1 & 3.

³⁴Ps. 24:1

³⁵Mahatma Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers*, (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1980), p. 119.

see compassion for the needy as basic to faithfulness to God's Law. Malachi reminds those who ignore the need of all for a decent living: "You have turned aside from my statutes You are robbing me."³⁶ Amos, too, speaks a word of judgement to those who fail to take human rights and basic human needs into consideration: "For three transgressors of Israel and for four I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold . . . the poor for a pair of shoes."³⁷

It is a fundamental Christian responsibility to care for others, and so Christians should commit themselves to caring for starving people. In knowing that God's unconditional love is now at work, Jesus promised the hungry an abundant life: "Happy are you who are hungry *now*, for you shall be satisfied."³⁸ Who will feed them? Surely, those who have tasted the love of God are the ones. It is simple Christian duty to feed the hungry and poor. James spoke of Christian responsibility as action rather than merely feeling compassion toward the hungry.³⁹ A responsible Christian is one who shares from his/her wealth in feeding and clothing the hungry and needy.

Wealth, food, and mineral resources are a few of God's gifts for human need. They are the "manna from heaven" for all God's people. Therefore, mineral resources or wealth do not just belong to land owners or stock holders or rich people, but to all God's people. Access to these resources should be shared by all. God grants a wealth of resources to a community to sustain human life, and supporting human life is more important than individual accumulation.

³⁶Mal. 3:7-8

³⁷Amos 2:6.

³⁸Lk. 6:21.

³⁹Jam. 2:15-16.

Jesus himself reminds us that life is more than food and the body more than clothing.⁴⁰ People who neglect human life for economic gain are not acting as God's stewards. Those who respect human life and respond to human needs are profitable stewards of God's resources.

4.3. Love for the Enemy.

Today, as has been the case from the time of ancient Israel, there is a contrast between two voices; the voice of the Word and the voice of the world. The Word says, "Love your enemies and pray for those persecute you."⁴¹ Contrary to the Word, the world repeatedly responds: "No pity, . . . life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."⁴² In Klassen's words, the world applauds: "Don't trust them, shoot them, bind them, and be prepared for massive retaliation on such scale that the life on half of the earth is wiped out."⁴³ This contrast appears in daily life situations, particularly in situations determined by hatred, or in societies controlled by power struggles.

The ethic of love toward one's enemies is not a new teaching, nor is it exclusively Christian, but has its origin in the earliest history of human life. It is often understood to be the best way of response to injury. Love of enemies paves the way to peace and to avoiding conflicts which lead to war.

⁴⁰Matt 6:25

⁴¹Matt. 5:44

⁴²Deut. 19:21

⁴³William Klassen, *Love of Enemies*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 5.

In pre-Socratic Greece, for example, vengeance was resolved by stressing commitment to peace and loving one's enemies. "Believe that you should love and honour," Isocrates exhorts the Cyprians, "those whom your king loves and honours, in order to win from me these same distinctions."⁴⁴ Love and honor are the criteria to be taken into consideration for the sake of peace in society. In so doing, each person has to avoid everything that destroys the peace of the community. Rather, each person has to work for the good. To do this is to create a peaceful society. Consequently, Confucius advised, "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."⁴⁵ Retaliation never builds a bridge, but destroys relationships. Where there is a broken relationship chaos and war prevail. To avoid a chaotic situation, therefore, Isocrates commanded: "Do not do to others that which angers you when they do it to you."⁴⁶ He understood that only by the principle of love could evil be eliminated and society achieve peaceful solutions when dealing with conflicts. In this matter, he admonished: "You should be such in your dealings with others as you expect me to be in my dealings with you." To achieve a peaceful society, the community should not only implement love in words, but also show love at work. "Manifest your good will . . . in deed rather than in words."⁴⁷ Love, therefore, is the key for good relationships, and it is the vital source of strength to overcome senseless suffering. As Euripides remarked: "For love is all we have, the only way that we help others."⁴⁸

⁴⁴Isocrates Vol. 1, Nicoles 57-61, p. 111.

⁴⁵Jane T Stoddart, *A Book of The Golden Rule*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1933), p. 11.

⁴⁶ Isocrates Vol. 1, p. 105.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁴⁸*Orestes*, IV, 209, 298-99, cited by Klassen, *Love of Enemies*, p. 15.

For the Greeks, the love of enemies does not mean to conform to one's enemies because of fear, but to work for turning enmity into friendship. For example, Pythagoras' admonishes: "So to be have one to another as not to make friends into enemies, *to love your enemies is not to absorb yourself into enemies* but to turn enemies into friends."⁴⁹ The theory of love for enemies is useful to create a peaceful strategy in overcoming enmity with kindness.

The Hebrews practiced love of the neighbor as a central aspect of the devout life. As the scripture reads: "You shall not stand against the life of your neighbor . . . nor hate your brother [or sister] in your heart You shall not take vengeance or bear grudge against the sons [or daughters] of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself."⁵⁰ They also taught the commandment to "love your enemies." To demonstrate this love, Rabbi Hillel accepted a gentile--whom Rabbi Shammai had rejected--as a proselyte in his Talmudic school because of his gentleness. The power of love toward the enemy embraced Hillel in showing love toward this gentile scholar. Courageously, Hillel urged the gentile to advocate peace rather than retaliation. "What is hateful to yourself, do to no other; that is the whole Law and the rest is commentary. Go and learn."⁵¹ Love and peace are the basic elements in the formation of a caring community. Living by these principles, the Jewish community was able to care for or to feed its enemies. "If your enemy is hungry, give [that one] bread to eat; and if [your enemy] is thirsty, give [that one] water to drink."⁵² For Jews and for Christians today, to feed or to care

⁴⁹*Ibid* , p. 17. Italics added.

⁵⁰Lev. 19:18.

⁵¹Stoddart, *Golden Rule*, p. 21.

⁵²Prov. 25:21-23.

for the enemies is to turn enmity into friendship. The biblical phrase "for you will heap coals of fire on his [or her] head" describes a brilliant lesson of peace toward enemies. The prophet Elisha advised the king of Israel not to slay the Syrian enemy troops that attacked Israel. Rather than retaliation, Elisha turned their evil into hospitality:

You shall not slay them Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master. So he prepared for them a great feast; and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the Syrians came no more on raids into the land of Israel.⁵³

The book of the prophet Jonah is another example of benevolence toward enemies. Although Nineveh was a traditional enemy of Israel, this book views God as the God who loves the enemy. Nevertheless, Jonah considered Nineveh to be the enemy, and waited upon God to scourge them. Later he was turned to God's love for the enemy, and accepted his role to be God's herald of love toward his enemies. Rhetorically, God cautions Jonah: "Should I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"⁵⁴ Jonah's ethical teaching reminds us to turn from our attitude of enmity and focus on God's love. Focusing on God's love, therefore, we are called to love our enemies, and to become God's messengers of love to the community. In this way we can bring even the worst enemy into a good and right relationship.

Christian ethics, therefore, views the theory of "love for the enemy," as a reflection of God's love as it is manifested in Jesus who becomes God's incarnational love in world. The love

⁵³2 Kings 6:22-23.

⁵⁴Jon. 4:11

of God strikes and heals.⁵⁵ This love has become the highway of peace for all humanity. As the scripture declares: "In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come to Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with Assyrians."⁵⁶ Christian ethics underlines love of enemies as "to exercise the same love whereby God has first loved us as rebellious and often hurtful sinners."⁵⁷ Only God's love can absorb evil, and lead people to forgiveness and reconciliation. Through God's love enmity could be rendered ultimately powerless. The enemy might remain an enemy, yet, through God's love, the power of enmity has been removed. The power of love is brought about in order to create a peaceful relationship, and to transform the enemy into a friend. Fundamentally, therefore, the principle of Christian ethics holds the power of love to be a creative power that overcomes the power of evil. It is this creative power that brings about forgiveness and reconciliation. As St. Paul says, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."⁵⁸

It is difficult and sometimes impossible to forgive those who have killed members of one's family. It appears illogical to reconcile with those who keep torturing us, or even with those who take away our property. Over the centuries many people have suffered these wrongs and come to the conclusion that revenge is the only possible solution. It is exactly at this time, in the midst of such enmity, that we hold on to the promise of God's love. It is in this kind of suffering that God's love incarnates and guides us into forgiveness and acceptance. As Wink

⁵⁵Is. 19:21-22.

⁵⁶*Ibid.* verse 23

⁵⁷*Encyclopedia of Biblical and Christian Ethics*, R. K. Harrison, gen. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1987), p. 240

⁵⁸Rom. 12:21

correctly noted: "God's forgiving love can burst like a flare even in the light of our grief and hatred and free us to love."⁵⁹ God's love is a key to success in the service of loving our enemies. Only God's love enables Christians to live this life of discipleship. "We must love not only in thought and word," exhorts Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "but in deed, and there are opportunities of service in every circumstance of daily life."⁶⁰

In loving our enemy, as God loved us, we might be able to recognize that the enemy, too, is a child of God. Through God's love, we would realize that an enemy is a part of our family, namely, God's creature who needs our love. In loving, we live a daily life under reconciliation. Therefore, only through loving can we win back our enemy by changing his/her attitude into a lovable humanity. We cannot win by hating our enemy and fostering the spirit of enmity. At the same time, we cannot imagine that loving our enemies means encouraging them to continue their evil.

4.4. Nonviolence and Social Strategy.

One way that both the love for enemies and the rejection of oppression, murder, and torture can be expressed is through nonviolent resistance. This leads to questions about nonviolence as a policy particularly as it relates to the formation of social strategy. The policy of nonviolence is useful to help individuals as well as the whole community to conduct themselves in a peaceful manner when dealing with conflicts.

⁵⁹Wink, *Violence*, p. 50.

⁶⁰Bonhoeffer, *Cost of Discipleship*, p. 165.

The first priority of nonviolent resistance is directed by a positive principle. This principle emphasizes a process of working toward peaceful solution: "evil is overcome by good."⁶¹ Therefore, to be a nonviolent person is to practice the way of peaceful means in overcoming evil. To achieve a peaceful solution Solomon in his proverbs recommends the strategy of humility: "A soft answer turned away wrath."⁶² The Owambo ancestor made the same point when he advised *Elaka lyombili olya fut'oondjo*,⁶³ "a soft answer paid a ransom." The theories of nonviolence point to the fact that hatred cannot be appeased by hatred. To appease hatred one has to follow the policy of peaceful means. "Pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding."⁶⁴

Secondly, nonviolent resistance views hatred as negative. Nonviolent resistance asserts that to sort out the conflict over evil with evil is to foster aggression. Beel'zebul cannot be cast out with Beel'zebul.⁶⁵ Aggression is an evil. To stay away from evil is to keep one's life from danger. As the well known English saying states: "Evil aggression thrives only on the resistance which it meets."

Thirdly, nonviolent resistance advocates resistance designed to prevent retaliation. For this reason, nonviolent resistance places emphasis on rational reflection as the means to confront and prevent strife.

⁶¹Rom 12:21.

⁶²Prov 15:1.

⁶³Haapanen, *Omaveletumbulo gAawambo*, p.47.

⁶⁴Rom 14:19

⁶⁵Mark 3:23.

Nonviolent resistance does not encourage a person to act like a victim who bows down or passively accepts the blows and assaults. Rather, in time of crisis, nonviolent resistance requires a person to suffer for what is right, just, and true. In so doing, an assaulted person should stand strong and firm knowing that this blow will be a witness to the truth. At the same time, the nonviolent person has to sort out resistant actions aimed not only at stopping the aggression, but also at converting the aggressor. Nonviolent resistance encourages actions that allow an enemy to live according to the better part of human nature, rather than living a life dominated by violence. When a violent person is changed by this encounter with nonviolent actions, then such a person is no longer an enemy but has become a cooperator in peaceful movements for change.

A situation nourished by bitter racial hostility and violence, such as contemporary South Africa, is a place where the practice of active nonviolent resistance is needed. Nonviolent actions should direct Christians who join campaigns for civil rights. Active nonviolence, however, is not easy, because where injustice and oppression exists there should be right and freedom. Under such situations nonviolent resistance calls for Christians to draw lines in their activities. Gene Sharp classified actions of nonviolent resistance into three different categories.⁶⁶

1. *Protest and Persuasion*. This includes showing disapproval of the course of events, from telling a person that what he/she is doing should be stopped, to letter-writing campaigns, petitions, marches and rallies. The purpose is to bring a conflict to light. In so doing nonviolent resistance hopes that those responsible for the injustice will see the truth and change their unjust policies.

⁶⁶Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publisher, 1973), pp xii-xvi

2. *Noncooperation.* This category includes refusal to allow some functions of a society to operate. It could be done through a strike or boycott. Where the injustice prevails, people may choose certain activities such as not paying taxes, resisting the draft, rejecting unjust laws, or closing down places of business. Nonviolent resistance at this point requires a participant to risk personal loss or injury. In this category, nonviolent resistance understands that accepting the loss or suffering the injury for a just cause is a key element to bringing about change. Therefore, nonviolence resisters must not let fear deter them from suffering wrong. Rather they have to stand up for a just cause and reject all injustice done to them. As Gandhi's admonishes:

If a father [or mother] does injustice it is the duty of his [or her] children to leave the parents' roof. If the headmaster of a School conducts his [or her] institution on an immoral basis the pupils must leave the School. If the Chair[person] of a corporation is corrupt the members thereof must wash their hands clean of his [or her] corruption by withdrawing from it. Even so, if a government does a grave injustice the subjects must withdraw cooperation wholly or partially, sufficiently to wean the ruler from wickedness.⁶⁷

3. *Intervention.* This is the last step in the progress made to bring a temporal halt to evil and injustice. This occurs when people insert themselves into a social process by occupying buildings, holding sit-ins, blocking entrances, standing across a roadway, lying down on railroad tracks. The purpose is to draw attention to specific operations that are the elements of the unjust system. It is to show to the oppressor the strength of the resistance movement.

4.5. The Third Way.

In Namibia and South Africa, many Christians who dedicated themselves to the fight against apartheid have looked down on Jesus' teaching about nonviolence, thinking that His

⁶⁷Louis Fischer, *The Essential Gandhi, His Life, Work, and Ideas: An Anthropology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 154.

teaching is impractical idealism. For them "turn the other cheek" suggests an unprogressive passivity, the passivity that makes many Christians "cowardly and complicit in the face of injustice."⁶⁸ Their argument is based on a literalistic interpretation of the two biblical phrases "resist not evil" and "going the second mile."⁶⁹ For them the phrase "turn the other cheek" means offering no opposition to evil at all. Therefore, it seems to counsel a policy of submission to injustice. The other phrase, "going the second mile," appears to encourage Christians to extend themselves to fostering the system of structural evil by encouraging collaboration with the oppressors.

Do Jesus' ethical teachings on resistance assign people to behave in these ways? These interpretations are really the result of misunderstanding Jesus' ethical teachings. Knowing Jesus' original social context, one is able to argue realistically, and consider Jesus' sayings as the most revolutionary and political statements.

You have heard that it was said: "An eye for eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you. Do not resist one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.⁷⁰

Although some biblical versions, the King James Version is one example, translated the greek word *antistēnai* as "resist not evil," it does not mean that Jesus has condoned evil. Nor did he tell his followers not to resist evil, rather to return no evil for evil. This interpretation of "resist not evil," has come to be understood by many Christians as leading not to nonviolent

⁶⁸Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, p. 12.

⁶⁹Matt. 5:38-41.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*

resistance but to blind submission. Did Jesus tell oppressed hearers who listened to his sermon not to resist evil? Surely not! For Jesus, evil has to be resisted. The Greek word *antistenai* in this text is an illustration of Jesus' standpoint. Etymologically, the word *antistenai* consists of two parts. *Anti-* a prefix which in English means "against", and a verb *histemi* which in its noun form *stasis* means violent rebellion, armed revolt, sharp dissention. Generally speaking, therefore, the term *antistenai* refers to a conceivably fatal disturbance or armed revolution,⁷¹ against which one resists.

Against the phrase "resist not evil," Wink suggests a proper translation of Jesus' ethical teaching: "Do not strike back at evil [or one who has done you evil] in kind. Do not give blow to blow. Do not retaliate against violence with violence."⁷² Therefore, it should be made clear that Jesus was not opposing the policy of resistance *per se*, but he opposed certain methods of resistance. If Jesus was opposing evil, and if Jesus' ethics concentrates on the irrelevant methods that anti-Roman resistance used, then the question remains: Did Jesus suggest a new and proper general way of responding against evil rather than flight or fight?

Besides the traditional choices of response to evil, namely passivity or violent opposition, that is flight and fight, Jesus suggested the third way of militant nonviolence. "Turn to him [her]

⁷¹Liddel/Scott defines the Greek word *antistemi* as to "set against", "stand against" particularly in battle. Eph. 6:13 is an example of the military usage "Therefore take the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand, *antistenai* [literally meaning, to draw up battle ranks against the enemy], in the evil day, having done to all to stand." The verb *stesai* means to close ranks and continue to fight. The term *antistemi* is used militarily in the LXX in the sense of "rise up against someone" in revolt or war. For example, Gen. 4:8, Num. 16:2, Josh. 24:9 and Jud. 9:43 to mention few. The verbal stem *histemi*, "to stand," is compounded with different words that are associated with warfare: *aphistemi* "to cause to revolt" (see Acts 5:37; in the LXX see Gen. 14:4, Ezek 17:15); *ekantistemi* "to rise against, raise in revolt against, attack" (see Matt. 10:21 and Mark 13:12).

Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, p. 13.

the other cheek also." This method Wink interprets as the way of humiliating the opponent or putting the opponent "in his/her place."⁷³

Jesus' Third Way introduces a new approach of dissolving conflicts through reasoning against the enemy rather than an immediate fight or taking flight. In so doing, the proponent could either dissolve the conflict on the principle of ridicule--as, for example, the Talmud teaches: "If your neighbor calls you an ass, put a saddle on your back"⁷⁴--or on the principle of law, namely, to argue reasonably, and convince the enemy of the right way of conduct. Jesus' Third Way is the way of nonviolent confrontation. It maintains confrontation as a peaceful means of leading to freedom for both parties involved in the conflict. It frees the oppressed from blind submission, and the oppressor from the sin of doing injustice. Through confrontation the powerless show their objective right and power to their oppressors. Rather than flight or fight, Jesus suggests for us a third way, the way of showing one's objective right and power when oppressed people encounter conflicts of social injustice. Wink summarizes Jesus's third way as follows:

- Seize the moral initiative
- Find a creative alternative to violence
- Assert your own humanity and dignity as a person
- Meet force with ridicule or humor
- Break the cycle of humiliation
- Refuse to submit or to accept the inferior position
- Expose the injustice of the system
- Take control of the power dynamic
- Shame the oppressor into repentance
- Stand your ground
- Make the Power make decisions for which they are not prepared
- Recognize your own power

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁷⁴*Babylonian Talmud. Baba Kamma 92 b.*

Be willing to suffer rather than retaliate
 Force the oppressed to see you in a new light
 Deprive the oppressor of a situation where a show of force is effective
 Be willing to undergo the penalty of breaking unjust laws
 Die to fear of the old order and its rules.⁷⁵

Using these tactics, one is motivated to bear love for the enemy as the central point at the heart of Jesus' Third Way. In so doing, the ultimate goal of a new and peaceful order should regulate the means we use to arrive at that order. The Third Way is not a program for seizing power, but a nonviolent revolutionary way of seeking an end to conflict through peaceful means. In Gandhi's words, "It is a program for transforming relationship, ending in a peaceful transfer of power."⁷⁶ For Jesus, this Third Way is to guide us in respect for the rule of law. This respect, however, does not imply blind obedience. In times of crisis when the social system is already legalized injustice which has created a situation of chaotic lawlessness, Jesus' Third Way encourages people to practice civil disobedience which also has respect for the idea of law.

Practically speaking, Jesus subjected himself to Jewish law, but deliberately broke it where it violated his consciousness of God's will. Peter and John before the Sanhedrin stated: "whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot but speak of what we have heard."⁷⁷ Thus, Jesus' Third Way requires people first to root out the violence that is in their own hearts. Confronting violence with a violent heart moves beyond the boundary of the third way. For Jesus' Third Way, violence cannot be confronted by a heart controlled by hatred, but only by a heart filled with love for humanity. The Third Way

⁷⁵Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, p. 23.

⁷⁶*Ibid* , p 57

Acts 4.19.

demonstrates that violence is counted out with a creative and loving power. Without such power a person cannot adequately challenge injustice and work for peaceful change.

In terms of a theological ethic, Jesus' Third Way is the way of the cross and passion. It is a way of sacrifice for others. "If any one would come after me, let that one deny self and take up the cross and follow me."⁷⁸ It is a way of facing violence with truth and hope. Those who undertake this way throw themselves on God's care that they may be empowered to take the risk of their life for others. Gandhi's statement is remarkable: "Nonviolence cannot be taught to a person who fears to die and has no power of resistance."⁷⁹ To be fit for Jesus' Third Way Mahatma Gandhi suggests people stand in God's truth and "cultivate the capacity for sacrifice, and hope". Only if people stand in this truth are they "free from fear."⁸⁰ Gandhi is right, because to know the truth is to know the source of freedom. Knowing the source of freedom one might live a free life. Jesus asserts "if you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."⁸¹

As one who knows the cost of discipleship Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds any who work for justice that Jesus' Third Way requires a risk of life and acceptance of one's own death. "When Christ calls a [person]," says Bonhoeffer, "he bids him [or her] come and die."⁸² Therefore, the way of nonviolent confrontation is not an end in itself, but the means to a new

⁷⁸Mark 8:34, paraphrased

⁷⁹Gandhi, *All Men Are Brothers*, p. 103.

⁸⁰Joan Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 28-29.

⁸¹John 8:31-32.

⁸²Bonhoeffer, *Cost Of Discipleship*, p. 7.

reality. By this way, through passion, one can face even death with hope of new life. Passion and hope are the powers that enable people to accept death, because even death is not the greatest evil one can suffer, but is the seed that grows into new reality. Therefore in Jesus' third way a participant is "free to act faithfully without undue regard for the outcome."⁸³ People know that after the cross, God can bring new reality to people.

This way of nonviolent resistance is the way that Christians will most often work for social change, even revolutionary change. The experience of the movements for the independence of India and civil rights for African Americans show that change does come through nonviolent resistance. But what of situations where the oppressor refuses to recognize the humanity of the oppressed and the justice of their cause? What if nonviolent resistance only produces even more suffering for the innocent rather than constructive change? Is it then permissible for Christians to join with movements that do not restrict themselves to nonviolent tactics?

4.6. The Concept of Violence.

Nowadays, the term "violence" has become a catchword for the news, whether on television, the front pages of newspapers, or book titles. The term invites the hearers and readers to a particular interpretation of the reality of the situation in which people are living. "Violence" appears to be a word used in daily discussions regarding actions that are understood to threaten the peace and order of a society. "Violence!" What is violence? Is it just a word, a state or condition, a program, an institution, an action, or a policy?

⁸³Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, p. 69.

Out of a painful dilemma, Jean Genet, developed some thoughts on the nature of violence. "Violence," he said, is "a word used by those who elaborated and imposed the language: the Masters."⁸⁴ For Genet, violence is a word used to serve the interests of a certain group: those who control power and superiority. He asserted that when violence is employed to serve the interest of the rich then it signifies grace and goodness, but when violence is used to support the powerlessness of the poor, then it becomes a sign of shame and degradation.⁸⁵ If Genet's observation is true, then "violence" could be defined as an ideological concept that is employed to justify any forceful action serving the interest of those in power and de-legitimize similar tactics by any group which questions those in power. If this is the case, then "violence" is a word given to manipulate and control rather than enlighten. Others would say that violence is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality in our societies. Violence is "a condition in which we live, in our cities, in our homes."⁸⁶ In this view violence is an act of force which is a reality in history. Combining these two views, "violence" can be defined as "physical force resulting in injury or destruction of property, or person in violation of general moral belief or civil law."⁸⁷

Etymologically, the English word "violence" is derived from the Latin term *vis*, or *violentia*. The term *violentia* means physical strength or force that is maintained. Morally speaking, *violentia* has a negative connotation. *Violentia* is a fearful, evil force that causes trouble. Violence is also defined as "behavior designed to inflict physical injury, or injury to the

⁸⁴George Edwards, *Jesus and The Politics of Violence* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972) p. 1

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸⁶Charles C. West, *Ethics, Violence & Revolution* (New York: The Council on Religion and International Affairs, 1969), p. 19.

⁸⁷Edwards, *Ethics, Violence & Revolution*, p. 2.

people or damage to property, or intention to injurious action."⁸⁸ If violence is defined as an intention to injurious action, then it should be asserted that any threatening actions or compulsory actions done to others without their consent are violent actions. Therefore, such actions should fall into the category of violence.

Genet's observation that violence is a "trick word" of language used either to justify the policy of injustice or a word used as means to impose exploitation or an evil system is correct. From the viewpoint of covenant ethics, West takes a similar position in answering the question of when forceful action might be defined as violence:

Violence is harm done to another outside the rules of conflict which such a society sets up. It may even be the redress of grievances by means which society does permit. For example, the occupation of a building by sit-in protestors may be regarded as violence, but not the planned eviction of the tenants from their home at the expiration of their leases so that the landlord can tear the building down for his profit. Again, if the government of a poor country confiscates without compensation a foreign-owned business, the action may be called violent, while the owners' systematic retention of that disproportionate profit from his enterprise, which led to the action, will not be so labelled.⁸⁹

According to the covenant ethic, what is called violence is an act which appears to be against the rules of conflict in a society. It is perceived as a danger which comes from outside the rules of society and disrupts social agreements. By this definition, violence could not be measured within the imposed rules of social relations even when the rules might harm the outsider, but any attempt to confront the rules would be seen as violence.

⁸⁸*Ibid* , p. 3

⁸⁹West, *Ethics, Violence & Revolution*, pp. 14-15.

But the usual ideological definition of the concept can be turned against itself. From another perspective, violence could be defined as an action taken to oppress the powerless and benefit those who hold power. Morris, for example, views violence as

To starve the people, ... to rob them of their dignity and self respect. ... to deny them their political right or discriminate against them. Elaborate structures of violence make a terrorist what he is, and he faces them as the weaker adversary.⁹⁰

The term "violence," therefore, can be understood in many ways. Violence may take structural, institutional, or behavioral form. In South Africa, for instance, what is legally right is not necessarily morally right. The contract labor system is one concrete example. It is legal in South Africa for a man to be separated from his wife, if he is a migrant worker living in a single sex hostel. And it is illegal for him to host his wife in an urban area if she does not have statutory permission to be there. Obviously, here the discriminatory laws are violations of family life: "What therefore God has joined together, let no [one] put asunder."⁹¹ Contrary to the rights of land and settlement, discriminatory laws justify the removal of black people from their dwelling places and act in favor of their confinement into remote areas. As stated in *Theology and Violence*, "The South African government has been able to uproot over three million people, disrupting stable communities, demolishing habitable dwellings, destroying schools, churches, small business and clinics."⁹² Though carried out within the rules of society, this is violence.

⁹⁰Colin Morris, *Unyoung, Uncolored, Unpoor* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969) p. 96

⁹¹Mark 10:9

⁹²Charles Villa-Vicencio, ed., *Theology & Violence: The South African Debate* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), p. 74.

Being dumped in poverty in settlements by the South African government is not the only violence experienced by victims of apartheid. Many of them suffer detention without trials, whether or not they lived by a strategy of nonviolence. Again *Theology and Violence* reports that "Frequently those who are detained are held in solitary confinement and without access to a doctor of their choice, their lawyer or family."⁹³ The reality of institutional violence returns us to the question whether nonviolent resistance is the only permissible way for Christians to confront oppression. What way ought to be followed in changing violent society, when any confrontation is regarded as a violation of the rules of conflicts? Is there any room for a violent reaction to institutional or governmental violence in Christian ethics? Should we insist on only nonviolent resistance or is a strategy of reacting to institutional violence with revolutionary violence sometimes permissible?

In principle, nonviolent resistance is an appropriate universal strategy because it stirs up the opponent's consciousness of right and brings about peace and reconciliation. But it should also be noted that blind submission to oppression is a great danger on the road to a real peace. At times what is called reconciliation is simply an excuse to implement or maintain injustice. People can find themselves with a difficult dilemma, for where violence prevails chaos and injustice reign and where hopes for peace and reconciliation go astray there is no real security or political stability for most people. Therefore, in creating a new way to a peaceful situation, the vision of a true reconciliation should condemn evil and injustice. Christians always have the duty to work faithfully for a solution that will put an end to the violent situation. In so doing,

⁹³*Ibid* , p. 75.

Christians will identify themselves with liberation efforts, and critically and carefully analyze the complexity of violence.

It is unethical to label "Christian discussions on violence" as terrorism or immoral⁴⁴ without full consideration of the context and situation. Christians can join with non-Christians and together seek a new approach which will ultimately eliminate institutional violence, in order to free people under the threat of violence, and bring about peace and justice in society. Christians also have the right and duty to protect their property, their own life, and the life and property of their fellow human beings as well. For example, in his 1982 on Day of Peace message, Pope Paul II asserted: "Christians have a right and even a duty to protect their existence and freedom by proportionate means against an unjust aggressor."⁴⁵ The Pope's message underlines the Christian's duty to resist and crush the repressive forces of institutional violence. The message encourages Christians to resort to appropriate actions as the means of redressing injustice, even the wrong of apartheid and other institutional violence.

This has always been recognized in the church. As Jacques Ellul points out in his study of violence, Thomas Aquinas stressed the principle of necessity. Aquinas held it to be not a crime when a poor person, out of need, steals bread from the table of the rich. Such a person should not be punished because he/she has not committed sin. On the ground of necessity Aquinas justified the action of the poor person because he understood that the bread had been stolen by the poor person because of the rich person's hardness of heart."⁴⁶

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁴⁵Wink, *Violence and Nonviolence in South Africa*, p. 9.

⁴⁶Ellul, *Violence*, p. 18.

Ellul also quotes Thomas Müntzer:

The Children of God are entitled to happiness in this world and to full enjoyment of all the good nature which God gives to [humanity]; and they are kept from enjoying what is rightfully theirs by the rich and powerful who have concerned the goods of the world.⁹⁷

The truth is that the poor are not poor as a result of lack of their own effort, but are poor because of the system of social and economic relations. Poverty is the result of repressive laws imposed to secure the interests of rich people and undercut the right of the so-called poor people. If the poor were not kept away from enjoyment of the fruits of their labor by institutional forces, and were able to live in peace as God intended, then there would be no merciless suffering and there would not be a great gap in the society of God's people. The point of departure for constructive social change lies in solidarity with the victims of the social structure who have become veterans of poverty as a result of repressive laws.

The focus, then, is not the purity of Christians, but the needs of God's poor, and the questions that need to be asked thus change somewhat: What methods of change are appropriate or permissible in a world where poor people are systematically destroyed by the institutional violence of those who hold power? What further strategies need to be applied when nonviolent protests often are met by police violence which sometimes ends with the unjust death of the demonstrators? Is there no other option than insisting on nonviolence in reaction to such institutional violence? Why is violence only used as a word to condemn the poor people when they react to the forces of institutional evil, but not used as a word to condemn this legalized evil that disrupts the peace of the community?

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 19.

Learning from the Namibian and South African situations, Beyers Naude is convinced that the churches cannot remain silent, nor should they issue empty statements in critical situations in which most people question the efficacy of nonviolence, and where most people are convinced that violence is the only option left. He stated:

It is not simply good enough to state that the church is against violence in any form, this has become a platitude which has almost lost its meaning in the situation of increasing conflict, violence, and bloodshed. . . . A much clearer pronouncement is needed in order to guide Christians in the painful reality of violence in which thousands are already involved.⁹⁸

The Christian churches, those who find themselves facing such an irreversible dilemma, should analyze critically both nonviolent and violent strategies before taking a harsh stand in helping Christians to work for better solutions. Naude's ethical stand challenges the Christian church to disassociate itself from subverting Christian theology in serving the interest of those who practice institutional repression. In the same tone, Charles Villa-Vicencio warned Christians to take their Christian faith seriously, and dissociate themselves from traditional State theology that advocates the institutional injustice of the State while it condemns the reactionary violence⁹⁹ of the oppressed:

Christian theology, through its history, has been frequently subverted to serve the cause of the ruling class, particularly when the dominant group within the church have belonged to the ruling class. In such situations theology has functioned as a powerful ideological legitimation for the state; sanctioning the institutional and repressive violence of the State and condemning the revolutionary violence of the oppressed.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸Richard P. MacBride, "The Kairos Document: A South African Watershed," in *Conrad Grebel Review* VI, 3 (Fall, 1988), pp. 228-229.

⁹⁹The phrase "reactionary violence" refers to violence which occurs in reaction to institutional violence inflicted by the state on oppressed peoples.

¹⁰⁰Villa Vicencio, *Theology & Violence*, p. 230.

Certainly, Jacques Ellul is correct when he asserts that violence is permissible when there is no other option left in the midst of a deteriorating situation:

For it is only by violence that the defense of poor can really be assured - there have been enough kind words, promises and so on. Only violence is effectual in the face of exploitation, coercion and oppression by the rich and their governments.¹⁰¹

It is unethical for Christians to proclaim the gospel to the hungry and oppressed, if first of all, they have not opened themselves to conflicts, and joined the poor in their plight and in their fight for justice. Apart from being observers, Christians should actively join in not just by feeding the poor and taking care of their material needs - though, of course the church should do that as well - but also by working alongside the poor in putting an end to the source of their misery. Surely this is what the head of the church means when he states: "He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.... To proclaim release to the captives... to set at liberty those who are oppressed."¹⁰²

Is it right for the Christian to join the poor in their violent reaction to institutional violence in order to establish a just society? M.N Daniel asked: "I want to join the freedom fighters but my religion worries me. Can a Christian take up guns and sticks against his fellow [human being]?"¹⁰³ In his book, *Unyoung, Uncolored, Unpoor*, written as a response to M.N.Daniel's question, Bishop Colin Morris responded with a affirmative "yes." He wrote: "Yes, I believe a Christian is justified in using violence to win freedom.... I know no other way

¹⁰¹Jacques Ellul *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1969) p. 32

¹⁰²Luke 4:18.

¹⁰³Morris, *Unyoung, Uncolored, Unpoor*, p. 10.

he can get it."¹⁰⁴ According to Morris, the world is ruled by those who maintain supremacy over others and threaten the powerless ones. Therefore, he believes that only violent revolution can overthrow the powerful and provide a decent future for the majority of the world's population. Morris declared that Christians also have the right and responsibility to take part in the struggle for justice.

From a historical point of view, Augustine encountered a similar question: "Is it right to defend with military means a relatively just society from attack?" He argued that in order to defend what was just and good, Christians sometimes had to use violent means.¹⁰⁵ He based his argument on the Biblical tradition of "holy war," showing that there were certain wars in the Bible commanded by God. War is to be waged by citizens because they have the right to defend their country from rape and destruction by outsider invaders.

War, however, was for Augustine, as it is for all Christians, to be regarded as a disastrous catastrophe that we should hate. Regardless of the benefits war brings to citizens, Augustine still remarked to his contemporaries: "But think of the cost of this achievement ... all that slaughter of human beings, all the human blood that was shed."¹⁰⁶ In itself, war is always evil and should be avoided. Augustine himself affirmed this truth. In spite of all of the disaster it brings, Augustine saw war as sometimes necessary because of the very nature and

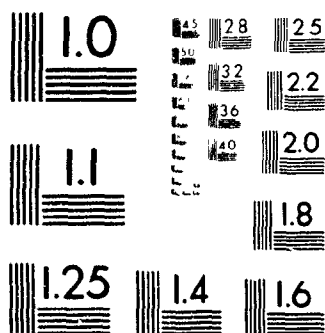
¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁵For a discussion of Augustine's theory of the just war, see Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), pp. 85-100.

¹⁰⁶Augustine, *City of God*, III, 14.

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power of sin in human life. War, therefore, can only be tolerated in certain extreme situations where "the injustice of the opposing side" makes war the lesser of two evils."¹⁰⁷

In waging a just war, therefore, certain conditions should be met, as Augustine suggested:

The war must have a just cause. That is, "the injustice of the opposing side."
 The ruler who conducts the war must have a right disposition or intention.
 The war must be declared and directed by the one who holds supreme authority in the land.
 The war must be resorted to "only as necessity"
 The war must be conducted justly.¹⁰⁸

For Luther as for Augustine, war is permissible only for the good of the neighbor. Christians, therefore, should be under obligation to assist "the sword" - Luther's title for the state - "by whatever means you can" because it is "beneficial and essential for the world and for the good of your neighbor."¹⁰⁹ Luther's viewpoint, however, did not allow Christians to participate in any war or to justify any struggle that is resorted to for the sake of conquering and appropriating others' properties. War was justified only when war is a necessary means toward the end of justice and peace of the whole society. War, therefore, is not to be resorted to for retaliation but "for the good of the neighbor and for the maintenance of the safety and peace of others."¹¹⁰ When it is maintained that the struggle is resorted to has as its end the justice and

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, XIX, 7.

¹⁰⁸Douglas S. Bax, "From Constantine to Calvin: The Doctrine of the Just War," in Villa-Vicencio, *Theology & Violence*, pp. 155-156.

¹⁰⁹*Luther's Works* (American Edition), Vol. 45, p. 95.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 95.

peace of society, those Christians who wage such a struggle are assisting the sword that God granted to them to establish world order by resisting injustice.

Though Luther for his own reasons opposed revolutionary movements in the sixteenth century, it is a legitimate extension of his basic principles to say that, in a situation in which outside oppression and domination violate the principles of human rights, Christians should be under obligation to work to assist "the sword" for the sake of justice, and help to oppose these outside oppressive forces in order to re-establish the good society. The traditional concept of a "just war" is properly used in reference to war that is waged to establish justice. A "just war" theory neither interprets the nature of war to be just, nor understands war in itself to be pure and just. Rather it stresses the possibility that some particular war might be permissible if waged for a relatively just cause. Although war in itself is an evil, when it is necessary in order to re-establish justice and its aim and conduct are kept within bounds, it is permissible. For that reason such a war may be viewed as a justifiable war.

It is valid to conclude that violence in social conflicts must be permissible only when there is no other alternative way left to overcome the institutional violence of the existing order. As Paul Germand puts it, "Violence is theologically legitimate when it is used in the service of justice, and when nonviolent means alone are inadequate to end injustice."¹¹¹ There is room for violence which is in reaction to state violence. Just as there is a time to keep silent, and time to speak, so there is a time for violent resistance, as well the time for nonviolent resistance. Biblically speaking, there is a time for war and a time for peace. For this reason, violent resistance should be advocated as a permissible action when taken as a last resort after

¹¹¹Paul Germand, "Liberation Theology: Theology in the Service of Justice." in Villa-Vincencio, *Theology & Violence*, p. 230.

nonviolent resistance has fallen upon deaf ears and hardened hearts, and when there is no way left other than violence. At this point violence should be seen as an action taken because no other possibility exists to achieve justice for those who most need justice.

In the light of the forgoing considerations, the Namibian liberation struggle would be justified as a just and legitimate movement in reaction to state violence that put an end to colonial injustice and brought about peace and political stability in the country. At this point it is legitimate to speak about such a struggle as waged for the sake of justice. This struggle was waged out of zeal for the right to justice and self-determination given by God, and from the responsibility Namibians have toward their fellow human beings. It was not a struggle based on the retaliation principle, but grew out of "holy rage." Namibians knew that if they would not struggle to free God's people living under inhuman conditions and injustice, they would be reckoned irresponsible to God as well to their fellow human beings. As a last resort, therefore, the armed struggle used tools of evil for the sake of justice. At this stage, armed struggle is to be understood in Kaj Munk's terms as "a holy rage for justice."¹¹² This holy rage was seen in Jesus when he struck the businessmen in the temple.¹¹³ Just as Jesus in his action was not directed by evil but by his burning passion for love and justice, so was the motivation of those who used the lesser evil of revolutionary violence in reaction to the greater evil of institutional violence. They were directed by the wrath of God's goodness that struck with fervor at the evil in the structure of society.

¹¹²Munk, *By The Rivers Of Babylon*, p. 121

¹¹³John 2:13-18.

In this light, therefore, a challenge of Christian ethics is constructively to define theories relating to "reactionary violence," that is, violent acts in reaction against institutional violence.¹¹⁴

4.7. Tendency toward the Revolutionary.

Can a revolutionary strategy bring about a good result in changing a society? Can something good come out of revolution? Prior to answering the questions, some consideration should be given to analyzing the meaning of the term revolutionary or revolution. "Revolution" or "revolutionary" is a term given to signify a process of radical change. According to Dale Brown, the word "revolution" was originally an astronomical term used to denote the revolving motion of stars. Its etymological meaning refers to "the perpetual motion of a celestial body, the completion of a cycle."¹¹⁵ While the original definition connotes a harmonious restoration, outside of astronomy "revolution" is a term used to describe a sudden, radical change. Politically the term "revolutionary" is often associated with violence. It is understood as a movement that results in actions working to overthrow one form of government to achieve another. "Revolution" does not necessarily require violence. Revolutionary aims are not always focused on the overthrow of governments, revolution can mean any new spirit of the modern age intending to establish a new religious, social or political order. A good result or satisfactory change is determined by the motivation and method in which the revolution is carried out. It is

¹¹⁴"Reactionary" here is not being used in the usual English-language sense of "the opposite of revolutionary" or to designate an ultra-right political position, but to indicate that the violence of "revolutionaries" reacts against the often legalized violence of the state.

¹¹⁵Dale W. Brown, *The Christian Revolutionary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1977), p. 14.

the motive that directs the revolutionary process toward a radical and sudden change. Therefore, the new reality of a transformed society is the measurement of revolutionary efforts.

An interesting interpretation of the creation story could argue that here revolutionary change resulted in a satisfactory reality. God initiated a radical change, forming being out of non-being. God's Word suddenly changed the world from the domination of chaos into a new ordered reality: "The earth was without form and void and the darkness was upon the face of the deep God said: 'Let there be light,' and there was light."¹¹⁶

If we interpret God's creative action as an act of revolutionary power that put the power of old reality (chaos) to an end, and brought about a change to new reality, then we can see God as the very source of all legitimate revolutionary change which works for a true order of peace and justice in society. This was the source, for example, of the revolutionary pronouncements of Isaiah issuing God's call to the exiles to enter a new reality: "Behold I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."¹¹⁷

Therefore, God's power works to bring a gospel message to all people living in the exile of injustice. This gospel promises new change in which the revolutionary word of liberation is carried along, inviting all God's people to join completely in the new reality.

God has completed the revolutionary change through the events of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ. By these events we are called to live according to this radical change

¹¹⁶Gen. 1:1-3.

¹¹⁷Isa. 43:19.

and enter daily into this new reality in our life. To be proper, any attempt to conduct social revolutionary changes should be conformed to God's historical actions through Christ.

From a theological-ethical point of view, revolutionary change is the essence we confess when we speak of new birth, new creation, and new heaven and earth. Therefore, each day calls people to celebrate these revolutionary events in which they perform a new reality of life by overcoming the injustice, the inferiority, and the upheaval of social life. By surrendering oneself for social justice and becoming God's instruments of peace, people bring about the newness of real life in this world. In so doing, people transform this world into a new earth and live in peace as God expects from creation: "For the first heaven and first earth had passed away, ... new Jerusalem, coming down out of [new] heaven 'Behold I make all things new.'"¹¹⁸

In the words of Brown's theological interpretation "Revolution consists in the actualization of the Promise of revelation proleptically appropriated by means of the paradigm acting on a function of the future."¹¹⁹ This is true. A revolution can take place only when we keep the biblical promises alive in our life, and act through believing that the promise will be fulfilled. Without keeping the biblical promises alive, people's actions without believing that these promises will be fulfilled are like a carpenter projecting a building scheme without a vision of accomplishment. Without an act of belief in the fulfilment of promises, a revolutionary vision perishes. Where there such vision perishes, people are no longer able to transform and reshape the community into a peaceful and just society.

¹¹⁸Rev. 21:1-5.

¹¹⁹Brown, *The Christian Revolutionary*, p. 14.

4.8. Summary

The Christian community is not only a community in fellowship with herself, but a fellowship that should be seen in relation to all people in the world. Her duties and place of responsibility are here and now on earth, for the good of humanity in the world. In fulfilling her Christian duties, the Christian community has to realize the world is an arena of social and human relationships. The world is God's arena of love and relationship.

God is the Creator of the universe, the sovereign Lord of all aspects of the world. God is not only the Lord of our personal, family, and church life, but also our economic, political and international life and institutions. God is not only the God who cares for the church, but also the One who cares for just social relations in society. God's lordship over creation is revealed concretely in Christ's ministry. The biblical ethic of the Old Testament confess strongly "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof."¹²⁰

The New Testament upholds the same confession that Christ is the Lord of all things in heaven and on earth. Strictly speaking there are no created things measured outside Christ, because all things in God's creation exist in and for Christ. In Christ all things have been freed for the glorification of God. "For all things are yours, whether...the world, or life, or death, or things present or things to come; are yours."¹²¹ Time and again the Scriptures declare that the society of this world "has become the kingdom of our Lord."¹²² In a broken society nurtured by hatred, Christian community has to learn from Christ and remind itself of responsibility for

¹²⁰Ps. 24:1.

¹²¹1 Cor. 3:21-22.

¹²²see Rev. 11:15.

reconciliation. As Christ, through his death and resurrection, reconciled the world to God, so it should be the task of the Christian community to proclaim this reconciliatory act of Christ to society. Therefore, the church of Christ has to take the ethics of responsibility seriously and reconcile all God's people with their fellow beings: "We are aware that the church has to bridge the division among [people] to take concrete steps on local, regional and national levels to be one church in God's world."¹²³

Real unity and fellowship within a community can only be realized when the church of Christ can participate in the ecumenical task of proclaiming the kingdom of God in church and society. The church of Christ on earth can only be a real disciple and faithful servant to Christ's call when it lives its faith by acting for God in the world. In so doing, the Christians should take their call seriously in caring for oppressed and desolate people. Christians should take the reconciliation process as an urgent program to heal and bind up the wounds that are created through daily conflicts. Life is full of clashes and injury. Therefore, it is a Christians responsibility to heal and unite these broken relationships and create right and just relationships in the community. This task however, could only be taken by those who truly believe and are obedient to Christ's command of love. As Bonhoeffer says, "Only [the one] who believes is obedient, and only [the one] who is obedient believes."¹²⁴

Therefore the theological-ethical task of the church is to proclaim the divine initiative to society. The church has the task of making society aware of God's total engagement in

¹²³Lissner, *Namibia* 75, p. 105

¹²⁴Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, p. 69.

humanity's historical situation, and encouraging a social acknowledgement of God's action in their daily life activities in society.

EPILOGUE

The role of Christian Ethics in the transformation of a Namibian community.

The Love of the Neighbor.

Love of the neighbor is the moral requisite of a community. In loving others, a Christian fulfils the moral requirement, and fosters creation of a peaceful situation. This moral requirement is present to build a strong mutuality and well-being within the community. As Arthur Dyck says, "To love one's neighbor is to refrain from inflicting evil on the one hand, and to do good on the other."¹ In so doing, a community refrains from any act or policy that leads to evil and destruction of humanity. Rather, the community is compelled by the spirit of love and the spirit of caring for others to do justice and act fairly in relation to their fellow human beings.

This spirit of love and caring is an important and serious requirement for Namibian people. They have lived for many decades under apartheid and racial discrimination, as they work faithfully in creating a lovable community. The requirement of love of the neighbor is the only way to refrain from paths which might lead to the destruction of society. To do justice and love for others is the only way for Namibians to establish the general welfare, maintain peace, and create a society in which there is enough for all. It should be noted that achieving liberation

¹Arthur J. Dyck, *On Human Care: An Introduction to Ethics* (Abingdon Nashville, 1977), p. 92.

does not mean that the struggle against injustice and oppression is over, or that commitment to the poor and oppressed has come to an end. This achievement has guaranteed the Church and individual Christians the right to work in freedom to carry out the task of justice and peace. It guarantees to the individual Christian the responsibility to act freely as a watchperson of the community, and to raise up a prophetic voice when he/she sees injustice being done in the community. Bishop Tutu's words remain valid: "The removal of one oppressor often means replacement by another. Yesterday's victim quite rapidly becomes today's dictator."² Tutu admonishes Christians to make love of the neighbor an urgent mandate to see to it that victims of social structures are well treated. As the scripture declares: "Son of man, I have made you a watch[person] for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me."³ In so doing leaders would stand alongside the oppressed and desolate ones, and create for them a place for true humanity in society.

Christian ethics has the significant task to be alert in all spheres of life, and to see to it that the needy and victims in society are justly treated. To do this, Christians should act unconditionally, being the faithful agents of God's love, and care for every person irrespective of their color, race, or political aspirations. Christians should take upon themselves the task of caring for needy and victims of poverty with a tender love, particularly the former returnees who are still unemployed, former freedom fighters, and the South West African territorial forces who are demobilized. It is also a responsibility for the Christians in Namibia to care for the displaced people who had left their homes because of the war, and who need to be repatriated or resettled.

²Kofi Appiah Kubi, *African Theology En Route* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), p. 165.

³Ezek. 3.17.

Christians should share their concerns and goods with the poor and landless people found throughout the country, both in the rural and urban areas, so that they too would realize God's love is for all humankind.

Christians, today have the great duty of extending their benevolent services in caring for and rehabilitating physically and mentality disabled people. It is a reality that most of the physical and mental disabilities of people have been caused by the life sacrifices made in the independence struggle. Therefore, healthy people in return should show love to these veterans of the struggle for justice seeing to it that they are treated humanely and good is done for them. Christian ethics should underline the importance of the sacrificial role people played in bringing about peace and freedom in Namibia. Their actions have liberated and united the oppressed as well as the oppressors today. This sacrificial role was important as a demonstration of love that saved millions of Namibian lives from colonialism, exploitation, and dehumanization.

Love of the neighbor also calls for the Church to listen attentively to the cries of her members within. The cries arose as a result of the doctrinal and moral teachings of the young churches who had focused only on spiritual life and neglected social, political, and economic life. As the Hammanskraal document stated: "It took the Lutheran Church as whole a very long time to discover that the message of the gospel has something to do with the daily life of people in a given situation."⁴

At this point Christian ethics should speak to the churches in Namibia the message that because God loved us in Christ as we are, so also Christians are called to love others as they are. This means appreciating cultural differences as one of those gifts God entitled each group

⁴*LWF And Southern Africa*, p. 30.

to contribute to the Christian faith. Therefore, to carry out the moral requisite of love for the neighbor, and to work for justice for all people, Christians should realize that the *kairos* of proclaiming liberty to captives who have been trodden under foot by patriarchal images and by traditional church theology is at hand.

Culturalization.

Namibia, like other African countries, has had its cultures condemned as pagan cults which have no use for Christian faith. As a matter of fact, the teachings of Christian ethics in the young churches threatened African Christians with hell-fire and brimstone so that they would abandon their African way of life. It instructed African Christians to imitate the European cultures, which were understood to be the only cultures within which Christianity could be lived.

Bishop Serote noted:

For too long the Church in Africa tried both to make disciples and to make black Scotsmen, black Englishmen, black Dutchmen etc. That is why today throughout the denominational pattern African christianity is still but a carbon copy of foreign experience.⁵

For the church, it was believed to be unethical to baptize any indigenous people who had not yet abandoned their culture and were not willing to accept European cultures. The missionaries and young churches also affirmed as unethical the baptizing of a person holding an African name. Therefore, to be accepted into the Christian family, a baptized person had to choose a European name. For a person to be baptized while dressed in traditional clothing and wearing cultural arts was thought, for the churches, to be a compromise with demonic power

⁵S. E. Serote, "Meaningful Christian Worship for Africa," in Hans Jergen Becken, *Relevant Theology for Africa*, p. 148.

Cultural arts and clothing were regarded as unchristian, and, therefore, should not be permitted in the church. Thus, Christianity was understood as the practice of Western or European cultures. Today even European and North American Christians have realized that this was a great mistake.⁶ Culture is a very serious element which Christian ethics should address so that Namibians are enabled to realize the importance of their cultural contribution to Christianity.

An example is "ancestor remembrance services." The church seemed to contradict herself in her ethical teaching when she viewed ancestral theology as "ancestor worship," and proclaimed rejection of it. Christian theology asserts and acknowledges the importance of saints in Christian worship. Christian teaching maintains the view that the visible church and invisible Church are one inseparable community of saints or believers, which is the one Church of Christ. Living members of the Christian community are portrayed as the *ecclesia militans*, a militant church, while the saints who have gone before are said to be the *ecclesia triumphans*, the triumphant Church.⁷ The *ecclesia triumphans* includes active participants in the midst of the *ecclesia militans*, impelling them toward completion.⁸ For this reason, one might ask: Is it a sin to maintain ancestor theology, remembering the living dead, if such remembrance is viewed as a celebration event of the future life? May it not be viewed as acknowledgement of the spiritual and universal aspect of the fellowship of community? What is wrong with a remembrance service if it confesses the continuation of life beyond death? The remembrance service should

⁶For examples see, from a Protestant Evangelical perspective, Charles Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979), and, from a Roman Catholic perspective, Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: 1985).

⁷Colom O'Grady, *The Church in the Theology of Karl Barth*. (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), p. 266.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 266

not be thought of as "ancestor worship". What is important in that the ritual process is the anticipation of celebrating events of a future life, and the spiritual union "in which the dead continue to be involved in this life among the living."⁹ The phrase "living dead" in that service signifies the spiritual communion of the living and the dead. Ethically speaking, this service reminds people that death is not the end of life, but a means to eternal life. In that future life the living dead are also in God's care, therefore they are spiritually alive. It should be noted that, by remembering, the living members join spiritually in the fellowship of community life. As Teddy Aarni points out, "To maintain a good relationship between the living and the living dead . . . [is] to remember and to hold the deceased in the same respect as . . . bestowed upon them during their life times as reputable parents and elders."¹⁰ Seen in this light, the remembrance service is an event which binds in fellowship the universal community of humanity. The communion of the living and the dead "does emphasize the very close bonds that unite the whole community."¹¹

Ethically speaking, Jesus' command to make "all nations my disciples,"¹² never means to convert the people first into foreign cultures in order to become disciples. To make people His followers means to develop people who care for others and do what is right in the midst of cultural differences. Jesus accepted people the way they are: "All that the Father [God] gives

⁹Benjamin Ray, *African Religions, Symbol, Ritual and Community*, (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1976) p. 140.

¹⁰Teddy Aarni, *The Kalunga Concept in Ovambo Religion from 1870 Onwards* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1982), p. 62.

¹¹Aylward Shorter, *African Christian Theology* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987), p. 127

¹²Matt. 28:20

to me, will come to me and [the one] who comes to me, I will not cast out."¹³ Christ's declaration does not mean that the gospel has to de-africanize, but it calls all nations into the familyhood of God. God's family, which includes all people in the world, is built on unity and diversity. This diversity is the precious gift of God's familyhood. Cultures are one of the diversities which express the richness of God's gifts to people. The fact that cultural diversity is God's gift to people should challenge Christian ethics to evaluate critically the role that culture plays in the church.

The Church, as the community of believers, is built up from within and by people of different colors, races, cultures, and nationalities. There is no single culture which is perfect. All cultures are imperfect because all are human creations. Both the community of believers, which is the Church, and the culture, which is the way of human living, are only to be justified by the Word of God, that is a living Gospel.

Because the Church is brought into being by the Gospel which is the word of God incarnated in the world, it is right to argue that the incarnation took place within a cultural context. The incarnation did not take place in an empty vacuum, but in the context of language and culture. Historically, this revelation took place in a specific place, namely Palestine. Palestine has its own culture in which the gospel was proclaimed. It was accepted within the cultural background of the people. From there the gospel was spread and accepted on every continent, in every language within a people's own cultural background. Ethically, Christian faith is generated in the context of encounter of the gospel with culture.

¹³John 6:37

The gospel is received in the culture of the people. Culture, however, does not exist to validate the gospel. Rather culture is the vehicle or tool in which the gospel is heard and accepted by the people. Christian ethics should relate clearly the importance of cultures. The Namibian people need to realize that their cultures are given to them to be accepted, respected, and transformed. They need to feel welcomed and at home in a Christian community as they observe their cultural practices. They need to know God trusted the gospel of the Son, Jesus Christ, to all cultures. John Mbiti writes:

The gospel does not throw out the culture; to the contrary; it comes into the culture; it settles there; it brings its impact on our total life within culture. It is within our culture that God loves us and calls us to repentance; it is also within our culture that God wants us to love, worship and obey Him. God does not want us to be aliens to our culture - but only aliens to sin. Our culture is the medium of receiving, diffusing, tuning in, and relaying the gospel. Without culture we would not hear the gospel; we would not believe the gospel and we would not inherit the promise of the gospel.¹⁴

Cultures, however, are imperfect elements that have their strengths and weaknesses. Christian dogmatics stress justification of a sinful human being through Christ. Cultures also stand in relationship to the gospel of Christ, and cultures have their justification in the gospel of Christ. Thus, cultures may be judged by the gospel. For that reason the gospel may reshape and transform our cultures. Therefore, Christian ethics should be guided by the gospel in analyzing the methods and theology that ancestors used for worshipping God. Ancestors were also directed by God. What God has put on the lips of ancestors in glorifying God has to find its way into Christian worship. The gospel can shape new forms of expression from the languages of primal initiation schools, and the sacrificial ceremonies practiced by ancient

¹⁴J. Mbiti, "Christianity and African Culture," in Kenneth Aman, ed., *Border Regions of Faith: An Anthology of Religion and Social Change* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987), p. 389.

Namibians. It can be argued that through the ceremonies and initiations God had also and been spoken and revealed to ancestors. To deny these rites is to ignore God's revelation in the history of creation.

It is significant for Christian ethics, in the light of the gospel, to re-address and examine culture so that people may realize Christ in their cultures. Christ is the one who transforms and reshapes cultures. People may understand their cultures as a tools in which the gospel is heard to be speaking. Then people may responds out of their daily concerns. It is only in this way that the Namibian people are able to understand God's incarnation in Jesus Christ. God became human, Christ entered in the culture of people.

It is time to liberate Namibian Christians from singing joyful hymns to the Lord God in the culture of strangers.¹⁵ It is time to bring Namibians into the newness of their cultures so that their cultures become one of those elements which enrich the Christian faith.

There is neither a single religion without God, nor a single culture which could not be a vehicle for God's revelation. God's orderly will is found in the expressions of every culture and every religion under the sun. Religion is a human attempt to reflect upon faith in God's revelation. Culture is the way of living in which human beings live according to the expression of their religion. Religion is the revelation of God in a specific culture enabling human beings to expresses their relationship toward the Creator based on their own way and their environment.

Solidarity with Oppressed Gender.

¹⁵Ps. 137:4

Someone's praying Lord
 We are praying in tears and anger
 in frustration and weakness,
 in strength and endurance.
 We are shouting and wrestling
 as Jacob wrestled with angel
 and was touched
 and was marked
 and became a blessing.
 We are praying Lord
 excite our imagination
 sharpen our will for justice.
 Be with us, touch us, mark us, let us be a blessing.
 Let your power be present in our weakness.
 Someone's praying Lord, redeem the times.¹⁶

The cry for justice is a daily reality in societies. This cry has impact upon church policies. From a feminist perspective, women are crying and wrestling for the creation of social change. This change aims to free women not just from unjust social structures, but also from church hierarchical structures that do not allow women to express the gifts that God has given them. Mercy Oduyoye expresses this well: "The women are very much concerned about the church, but the church is not so much concerned about the women."¹⁷ This expression of an African woman points to concrete grievances experienced by women who have suffered under the Church's continuing patriarchal influences. Though the expression is worldwide, it reflects correctly the hierarchical structures of the Namibian churches. In every sphere of church activity that involves lay people there are always large groups of women. They are faithful participants in any church activity and dedicate their lives to fostering church life. However, when it comes

¹⁶Johannes Lukas De Vries, "Report on Recent Developments in Namibia," in *LWF and Southern Africa*, p. 75.

¹⁷Mercy A. Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1986), p. 124.

to the issues of women's emancipation and full participation in synodical church councils, or assuming higher vocations in service to church then no positive status is given to women.

Christian ethics, therefore, should re-examine the status of women within church structures and deal with the issues of women's ordination, sexism and women's emancipation. Just as Christians have been moved to fight the apartheid policy that excludes blacks from their rightful role in the society, so now they should act to change church and social structures which exclude women from their rightful role in the community. In so doing, Christian ethics should be directed by tender love and compassion toward women so that women might hear Christ speaking to them in their daily life. It is hoped that they might concretely experience Christ's liberating message, "I came that they may life, and have it abundantly."¹⁸ Christ's message assures all people, including women, of becoming full participants in this life. Women are liberated by Christ and called to follow Jesus and serve God and their fellow human beings in all vocations within the structures of the church. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female for you are all one in Christ Jesus."¹⁹ If the church practices male dominance in its hierarchical structures, then its claim of freedom in Christ no longer has meaning. Freedom in Christ includes women's freedom from any male-dominant structures. Therefore there is no real freedom in the church unless women are freed from the slavery of hierarchical structures.

Christian Ethics and the role of national reconciliation.

¹⁸John 10:10

¹⁹Gal. 3:28.

Firstly, reconciliation refers to the historical action of what God has done and is doing in establishing the new human community. Reconciliation refers to the purpose of the Church. It is a reconciled new community. This occurs internally and externally as the Church relates to its culture. Consequently, reconciliation take place is a social arena.

Secondly, reconciliation has its power from Christ who is the central point of its process. Christ is the central point of reconciliation because in him the God-human relationship, and the human-human relationship is restored to life. For, as it the Scriptures say, "Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world with himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."²⁰ The central message of the gospel points to the concrete reality of God in Christ whose ministry was seen in Jesus' life among his people, sharing their needs, temptations, joys and sorrows. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection expresses the power of God's love for the world. This power of God's love in Christ has transformed the world and restored it to a right relationship with its Creator. In this power, therefore human beings are enabled to transform "the source of nature for common welfare, to work for justice and peace in the society, and in other ways to use his creative power for the fulfilment of human life "²¹

Thirdly, the objective of the reconciliation process is to bring a person to a new relationship, that is, a new life. Those who are brought into this new life are able to accept and forgive others as Christ has accepted and forgiven them. All people are weak and sinful human beings. Reconciliation works for the creation of a new restored life. In this restored life people

²⁰2 Cor. 5:18-19.

²¹Hessel, *Reconciliation and Conflict*, p. 30

are brought into a new reality in which they respond in faith to the love of God by loving their fellow human beings. "God's forgiveness to [people] moves them to respond in faith, repentance and obedience, and initiates the new life in Christ."²² The new life, however, is not a life without conflicts. Conflicts no longer have power over people because in Christ people are freed and given a basic confidence to witness to his power of reconciliation. The new life compels people to act socially in the world, and in Christ's love, to win the world to God. The whole world is the object of Christ's reconciliation. In acting socially one should profoundly stand for "a radical reconciliation" rather than standing for "blind reconciliation" which is a human creation. A "radical reconciliation" makes no compromise with evil and injustice in worldly structures. It is a radical reconciliation because stands for the righteousness of God. Radical reconciliation stands against blind reconciliation which is a reconciliation made under the shelter of injustice and evil. "Blind reconciliation" has room for compromise with injustice because its aim is to promote self interest. For radical reconciliation one must confess peace and justice for all human beings, and work for the good of all people in the community. According to Hessel, Christians are the responsible emissaries of peace and justice for the well-being of all God's people:

The members of the Church are emissaries of peace and seek the good of man in cooperation with powers and authorities in politics, culture, and justice when these same powers endanger human welfare. Their strength is in their confidence that God's purpose rather man's schemes will finally prevails.²³

Strategically, reconciliation is the radical power of love working in us for us and for others, in order to create a suitable human community and to transform it into a lovable society.

Ibid., p. 30

Ibid., p. 31

The radical power of reconciliation is present to transform people from enmity into friendship, from warmakers to peacemakers, from doing injustice to becoming advocates of justice, from hatred to love, from prejudice to confidence, and from old idealism to new reality. For a better and just transformation of our communities, people need to open their hearts to Christ's tender love, and acknowledge this new reality in Christ by extending this act of freedom to others. In so extending, people need to expose injustice, and to proclaim the reconciling message of justice and peace. The goal of reconciliation is to equip people with arms of love so that they are able to overcome the conflicts of daily life. It is hoped that the barriers of social life within our communities, would be broken down to make a bridge of hope on which others would reflect and come to experience the amazing love of Christ. In the community that is shaped by God's love there is unity and wholeness of life. Bishop Bonifasius Ausiku observed a reconciled community to be ". . . not a land of discrimination but a land of equality. . . . [N]ot a land of apartheid but a land of unity. . . . [N]ot a land of oppression but a land of freedom. It is not a land of injustice but a land of justice and peace."²⁴

Where the walls of hostility are broken down there is acceptance and forgiveness. Where forgiveness prevails, there is peace and a new reality lived in the fellowship of the community. Because in reconciliation there is "forgiveness, consideration for one another, love, service, the doing of good, peace and joy."²⁵ Therefore reconciliation presents to people a new life, new unity, new hope, and new freedom for others. To encounter this new life is to be convinced to work for abolishing any social discrimination and oppression because they have no space in a

²⁴"The Church and the Namibian Quest for Independence." *LWF Documentation*, No. 22/23 (July, 1987), p. 51.

²⁵*Luther's Works*, vol. 46, p. 69.

reconciled society. Therefore, reconciliation, is a very costly gift given to the church which challenges it to live harmoniously with all people. Dr. Paul Isaac, a Professor of Systematic theology at Paulinum Theological Seminary, Otjimbingwe, remarked that liberation and reconciliation challenge national reconciliation,

to break down the walls of divisions, apartheid and racism. . . . Social reconciliation and freedom is inseparable from liberation of the weak and helpless The walls of separation are to be challenged and broken down as a matter of principle. Social reconciliation is against a racial church, a class church, a cultural church and a national church.²⁶

In its nature, therefore, reconciliation is a costly unity, a practical action, and a real event that calls people to a right relationship with God and their fellow people. Reconciliation as a costly unity should not be restricted within the fellowship of believers, but be applied to the unity of God with the unity of the world. The church seeks to demonstrate this costly unity in Christ when she breaks down all racial and social class barriers, and when she relates the reconciling message of the gospel that "God was in Christ reconciling the world." However, the church could not demonstrate this costly unity if she submit to the walls, divisions, and ideological structures of the world. In recalling the past history of Namibia, three Namibian Lutheran Churches in their UELSWA²⁷ general meeting of 25-28 June 1992 in Windhoek, confessed their failure to witness faithfully to reconciliation in a divided community:

For past decades we, the Lutheran family in Namibia, have been divided by the walls of colonialism, apartheid, and racial discrimination. As a result, we failed actively to stand in unity and raise up a prophetic voice against economic and

²⁶Paul Isaac, "Liberation and Reconciliation" in *Namibia Report*, vol. 1.1, no. 10-11 (Oct/Nov 1990), p. 5.

²⁷United Evangelical Lutheran Church in South West Africa (Namibia).

political injustice, and to stand against the abuse of human rights. Therefore we confess our sins of the past and work toward a reconciliation.²⁸

Reconciliation is a costly process because it requires faithfulness to God's love, and a tremendous love for others in order to unite the scattered and divided community. It is a costly process because it is based on the sacrifice of Christ's blood which was shed not for certain people or races, but for the whole world. For this reason, reconciliation should not be privatized to a certain sphere of life but be viewed as the process that transforms the life of the whole society. Reconciliation happens when society works to overcome racial, tribal, national, and economic barriers between people, and speaks to abolish the structures that prevent the community from exercising its right to freedom.

As Namibian people engage in national reconciliation, the role of Christian ethics should be to define and articulate clearly the meaning and purpose of reconciliation. Ethically speaking, reconciliation requires a responsible community in which each member acts faithfully toward his/her fellow people. People are called to act responsively to God's action of reconciliation through Christ in a human community. To act responsively is to acknowledge the truth that God in Christ reconciled the oppressed and oppressors so that they all might live in peace with one another. God in Christ reconciled the world by establishing a new human community in which justice, love, and peace are the characteristics that reign. Real reconciliation cannot be achieved without true repentance and forgiveness. Therefore while striving for this reconciliation the mistakes of the past should be confessed and declared invalid. This would keep the process of

²⁸*Omukwetu*. No 16 (August 30, 1992), p. 1. This extract is my English translation from Oshiwambo original text.

reconciliation going, and would enable people to come together as one nation and one community. Gawanas's argument is true:

if reconciliation has to become a reality and meaningful, we have to learn from the past to avoid the same mistake. . . . If we are wrong we should say sorry. . . . Those who have been wrong must be able to accept that hand of friendship saying: 'I forgive you.'²⁹

In his speech delivered on Oct 9, 1992, at Winburg, South Africa, President F.W. de Klerk viewed the sin of apartheid as a violation of peace and unity. For nation building and for a prosperous society he therefore asserted the dream of apartheid should be invalid; and pleaded for the citizens to work for reconciliation: "For too long we clung to a dream of separated nation-states when it was already clear that it could not succeed. For that we are sorry. Yes, we have made mistakes. Yes, we have often sinned and we don't deny this."³⁰

To address the Namibian people with the message of building a new society, Christian ethicists need to encourage people to put off their old life with its racism, sexism, exploitation and oppression. Reconciliation requires people to be renewed by putting on the new nature of justice, brother/sisterhood, equality and humanness. In biblical terms, people have to "put off their old nature which belonged to their former manner of life that is corrupt and be renewed in their spirit of minds, and put on the new nature created after God's likeness."³¹

Christian ethicists, however, should underline the importance of reconciliation in relation to economic and political reformation. Economically, reconciliation will occur when natural resources serve the interest of all Namibian people. Christian ethicists should address critically

²⁹*Namibia Reports*, vol. 1, no. 3 (April 1990), p. 3

³⁰*Kitchener-Waterloo Record*, Oct. 10, 1992, p. A4.

³¹Eph. 4.22-24.

the economic gap between poor and rich, and analyze with tender love the issue of landlordship. Reconciliation will be understood, accepted and believed when the walls of separation among the nations have been broken down. Reconciliation can be achieved when land distribution becomes fair and just.

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